

THE

Religion of Reason:

Addressed to the

RISING-GENERATION;

In order to

Guard them against the Infection of  
BIGOTRY and SUPERSTITION;

A N D

Inspire them with just and noble Sentiments, in Relation to

GOD, their DUTY, and their HAPPINESS.

I N A

C O N F E R E N C E

Between the Honourable

M. \* \* \* \* and his S O N.

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L O N D O N:

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TO THE  
R E A D E R.

**T**HE following Conferences were drawn up by a Gentleman of great Probity and Understanding, for the Diversion of some melancholy Hours, which followed the Loss of a very amiable Consort. They were intended originally for the Benefit of his own Children, and are a Transcript of those wise and virtuous Sentiments, with which, in his usual Conversations, he endeavoured to inspire their tender Minds. The Subject he treats of is the most important that can be; and the Manner in which he has handled it is the most familiar, and so the most useful to those of the rising Generation, whose Instruction he had principally in View. It is to be hoped this

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To the R E A D E R.

pious and laudable Design will be crown'd with the desired Success, by producing the Fruits of Righteousness in the Lives and Conversations of those to whose Service it is more especially devoted.

The Author had often, with Grief, reflected upon the great Differences that are in Men's Opinions about Matters of Religion. This Diversity he thought principally owing to their not examining Things to the Bottom. They have failed in their *Foundation Work*. They have too much slighted that *Philosophy, which is the natural Religion of all Men; and which being natural, must needs be universal and eternal*; and upon which therefore, or at least in Conformity unto which, all instituted and revealed Religion must be supposed to be built. They have also forsaken the Rule of *Right Reason*, which only is capable of producing true Symmetry in their intellectual Build-

To the R E A D E R.

Buildings: And they have applied themselves, without any Rule, to the Interpretation of *Words* and *Phrases*, which being easily Susceptible of various Senses, have produced as many deformed Irregularities. Nay this Disorder has been so great, that, instead of digging in the least for their Foundation, they have frequently began to frame their Theological Systems at the highest Points of Revelation: And in that they have acted as extravagantly, and uncertainly, as that Man should do, who would undertake to frame a Roof for some Fabrick, of whose Dimensions he had no Cognizance. To Remedy this Evil, our Author begins his Conference at the first Principles that he could discern in Human Nature; and he proceeds to build thereupon as gradually and regularly as possible. So that the whole Business of Religion, whether natural or instituted,

To the R E A D E R.

will appear in this Draught to be a steady Prosecution of one and the same regular Design, in God, the Author of both: A right understanding of which Truth will give great Satisfaction to any considering Mind.

It is grievous to observe the sad Consequences in which Mankind has been involv'd by the forementioned Differences of Opinion: Rash Judgment and Censures, Hatreds and Animosities, Disputes and Wars. The mild and sociable Nature of Man has been thereby transformed into a greater Ferocity than that of Bears and Tygers. And what is the most deplorable Consideration of all, is, that these Mischiefs have been more frequent, and more violent, since the Propagation of *Christianity* in the World, than before: As if indeed *Jesus Christ*, according to his own Expression, were not *come to give Peace upon Earth, but Division and a Sword.*

To the R E A D E R.

*Sword.* Far be it from us, nevertheless, to attribute any such Thing to the Genius of his Religion, which consists wholly in Humility, Meekness, Moderation, Benignity, and other such like social Virtues. No, the Mischief arises from the Perverseness of Men's Spirits, who have turned the wholsomest Food, nay the highest Elixir, into the rankest Poison. They have not been content with the *Simplicity of the Gospel, which is a plain Rule of living well*, but have strove to surpass one another in finding out hidden Mysteries: And as any one has hit on a conceited Distinction, he has immediately call'd that Fancy the Essence of Christianity. From thence have sprung the various Sects into which the Christian World is divided; and secular Interest being now interwoven with this vain-glorious Humour, the Distinction of Sects is kept on Foot, and looked after,  
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*To the* R E A D E R.

far more carefully than the essential Duties of Life. This is the deplorable State of Things at this Time. And the Consideration hereof has been the Needle that chiefly directed our Author's Course in the Management of his Subject. For having seen the Fruitlessness of all controversial Writings; never productive of any good Effect, but exceedingly efficacious in nourishing the Seeds of Enmity and all manner of Evil; he resolved with himself, in undertaking this Work, to avoid studiously whatever is controverted by any that call themselves Christians; and to draw up only a System of such Things as they are all agreed in, and which lead directly unto Practice.

Somewhat of this Nature might certainly be of great Use in the World, towards the healing our sad Divisions in religious Affairs, by drawing Men off from their vain Niceties, to solid  
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To the R E A D E R.

and useful Doctrine; and yet there is much Reason to apprehend the present Treatise will, at first Appearance, be violently opposed by all those who have embraced the Interest of any particular Sect. These, tho' they find nothing exprest in it but what they themselves approve of, yet the total Omission of other Things, which they inordinately delight in, may make them condemn it. All *Sectaries* are so fond of their own Badge of Distinction, that they are ready to cry out against any Thing which bears not that Mark, as *Antichristian* at least, if not *Atheistical* and *Diabolical*. However, their Approbation, in such a Case as this, is of greater Weight than their Censures; because in the former they all agree, but in the other they all differ. Neither *Papist* nor *Protestant*, nay nor any of the Subdivisions on either Side, but approve of all Instructions  
tending

*To the* R E A D E R.

tending to Piety and Virtue; which are the Things here aimed at. In that they are unanimous; but in Matters of meer Speculation, and outward oeconomy, (which are the Things here omitted) they are as opposite to each other as the Poles of the Heavens. There is Reason therefore on the whole to expect, notwithstanding the Opposition it may encounter at its Introduction into a partial World, that this well-intended Endeavour will at length obtain a favourable Reception, and direct many into the Paths of Truth and Happiness.



T H E  
RELIGION of REASON:

Or, an instructive

*C O N F E R E N C E*

B E T W E E N

A FATHER and his SON.

F. **C**OME, Son, since we are now at some Leisure from our ordinary Occasions, and have thereby the Advantage of enjoying that Freedom of Thought which is inconsistent with the Cares of the World, I am desirous to take this Opportunity of exercising your Mind in Speculations of noble Use, and even of universal Influence upon your whole Life. Compose your self therefore to Seriousness: Lay aside, and if it be possible, for one Hour, forget all that ever you have hitherto learnt: Attend only to the genuine Result of your own

B. present

present Reflections; and in that manner answer me with a manly Liberty to what I shall ask you.

*S.* I am infinitely obliged to you for your constant Care of my Improvement in all Things laudable, and shall at this Time endeavour to observe the Rules you give me as exactly as possibly I can.

*F.* Tell me then, in the first Place, what it is that you love best.

*S.* I know you will not have me distinguish between yourself and my Mother, and I hope you doubt not but you are both of you the joint Objects of my best Affection.

*F.* No matter what I think, or what I doubt of. I desire only to hear your Thoughts, but to hear them pure and undisguised. That you may not therefore either deceive yourself, or dissemble with me, consider this Case. Suppose both your Parents and yourself had been any where lock'd up together, so long, without food, that we were all well nigh ready to dye for Hunger, and that in those Circumstances some Friend sent you  
privately

privately a small Morsel of Meat, capable only to sustain your Life for a few Hours, and withal sent Word that we could none of us in that Space have any more. In such a Case, tell me truly whether you would eat that Meat yourself in private, as it was given you, or discover and give it unto either of us.

*S.* You put me to a hard Choice, which I would willingly be dispensed from.

*F.* I know very well where the difficulty pinches you. 'Tis not in chusing, but in declaring your Choice. Wherefore I once again exhort you to deal freely and sincerely with me, and I assure you that I will not be offended with any Determination you shall make, but on the contrary much pleased to hear one made in Simplicity and Truth.

*S.* What you intimate of Offence assures me that I need not make any Declaration at all upon that matter. For I perceive thereby that you know the Weakness of my Nature, and see into those secret Movings of my Heart which I am ashamed to discover.



#### 4      *The* R E L I G I O N

*F.* 'Tis enough, I will spare your Blushes. And now taking for granted that, in such a Case as we have supposed, you would prefer the Preservation of your own Life before ours, I desire you to consider again, and tell me whether you love yourself or us the better.

*S.* What shall I say! you force me to acknowledge that I love myself better than perhaps I ought to do.

*F.* That is not the Thing that I am now enquiring after, whether this supreme Inclination of *Self-love* be well or ill, but only whether it be so or no. Consider therefore, further, if there be nothing else in Nature that more nearly affects you than yourself. I mean not Persons, but Things. Do you not feel in your Heart some desire of *Honour, of Power, of Pleasure, or of Riches?* I know you do. Tell me therefore in what Rank you place those Things.

*S.* I do not find that I love any of those Things simply for themselves; but only as they have Relation unto me, and because they may be of some Convenience

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cy or Advantage unto me: So that my Love of them is but secondary, and for my own Sake, and therefore, for ought I now see, I must remain of Opinion that *I love myself primarily, and the best of any Thing.*

F. No doubt you do so; nor shall I ever advise you to do otherwise. But here I must admonish you, that the Management of this Principle requires your utmost Care. For upon the right or wrong Use thereof depends your Happiness or Misery. Observe, therefore, that tho' this *Self-love* be a single and general Rule of Nature, yet those Things which you have well observed that we love secondarily are exceedingly various; and that nothing is more easy or more ordinary than for Men to err therein, and out of a wrong conceived Opinion of some Good, to place their Affections upon such Things as are really evil. Now the sad Consequence of such ill placed Affections is at the best a certain Frustration. For tho' those Persons do obtain that very Thing which their Desires are let out after,

6      *The* RELIGION

yet finding not therein that real Good which they expected, their Disappointment is the same or greater than if they had obtained nothing at all. And this alone is no small Degree of Misery; but instead of Good to find an Evil, is a great one; and to be continually obnoxious to such like Miscarriages, is the greatest. These are the Effects of Precipitancy, Ignorance, and Error. But on the contrary, to weigh deliberately the true Value of Things, to understand it, and accordingly to direct our Affections unto the Prosecution of such Objects as are truly valuable, these are the Methods in which our *Principle of Self-love* must be conducted, and in that Manner it will not fail to lead us to a happy Issue. These things I tell you before-hand, that you may be sensible of their Importance, and thereupon apply your Mind with due Circumspection to the Discussion of such Questions as I now design to propose unto you.

S. Alas, I am at once so sensible, both of the Necessity and Difficulty of that  
Work,

Work, and thereupon so fearful of mis-carrying in it, that I am forced rather to beg the Benefit of your Instruction than to expose myself to such an Examination.

F. Be not so diffident of yourself. Take Courage. Remember only to observe my Advice of attending closely to the genuine Results of your own Reason, and let us try whither that will lead us.

Seeing that in the general you find yourself inclined to *love or desire nothing but as it appears some way conducive to your own Good*, consider a little which of those Things that I have propounded to you appear most so; and tell me thereupon which of them you most desire. I will repeat and a little explain them, that you may deliberate maturely. By *Honour* I would have you understand such a Repute and Fame of some Thing excellent in yourself as may excite Admiration and Respect in others. By *Power* I mean not only Strength of Body, but such an Authority over some Number of Men, as renders them subject to your Command. By *Pleasure* I intend not only those child-

•     *The*   R E L I G I O N

childish Sports which you have hitherto delighted in, and begin now to abandon, but all other manner of Delights that may be suited unto the Variety of Desires which your Progress in Years will bring along with it. And by *Riches* I would have you represent unto your self the Means whereby Men ordinarily procure unto themselves all outward Enjoyments. Tell me therefore which of these Things do you now conceive most conducive to your Happiness.

S. As you represent them, they all seem good upon different Accounts. And for ought that I know, many other Things besides these may be represented unto me in the same Manner. So that truly I find a great Difficulty to make any just Comparison between them, and thereupon to determine which hath absolutely the most Good in it.

F. What, are you so unresolved in your Judgment concerning the Value of these Things that you bear an equal Indifferency towards them all, and have no Inclination or Desire after any of them?

S. To

S. To proceed with that Precaution which your Lesson requires, it certainly behoves me to govern my Desires by Judgment, and therefore to restrain all Desire of those Things until I be convinced of their different Value.

F. Well, but for all this, I am of Opinion there is something else, which you do already so far understand to be for your Good that you cannot chuse but desire it earnestly; and I had rather hear you remark it yourself than that I should name it.

S. Let me see: Thus far we are come. There are many Things which present themselves unto my Choice under the Appearance of Good; some of which are indeed such as they seem to be; others, notwithstanding all their specious Appearance, are real Evils; but how to discern and distinguish between the one and the other I am yet Ignorant. You ask me now what it is that I most desire. Absolutely it is nothing else but *such a Knowledge of all Things relating to my own Good, as may enable me to chuse and prosecute that which is really most conducive unto it.*



*F.* I perceive then that *Knowledge is the primary Object of your Desire.* And I am not a little pleased that you make it so, because indeed it ought to be the first Spring of all our Motions. But that is yet too general. Tell me therefore what particular Subject of Knowledge you are chiefly addicted unto. Is it the *Knowledge of God*, of his Essence, of his Attributes, of his Laws? Is it the *Knowledge of Nature*, of the Universe, of Mankind, of yourself? Is it the *Knowledge of any particular Arts* and Contrivances that are effected by Men? or is it *any other Thing* that human Understanding is or may be conversant about?

*S.* I must answer again unto these Particulars as the former, that I am rather confounded with the Consideration thereof, than any ways able to determine which of them is indeed most worthy to be elected. But, however, this general Circumstance, which I stick close unto, viz. *That my Knowledge may be such as to enable me to chuse and pursue the proper Means of my own Happiness,* will I hope  
by



by Degrees conduct me unto some further Discovery.

Y<sup>e</sup> You guess rightly. It will infallibly do it. Let that therefore be the Rule of all your Researches. And now, applying that Rule to those particular Heads of Knowledge that I propounded, *God, Nature, Man, &c.* tell me which of them seems to you the most important Object of your first Study,

S. My Aim being to seek *my own Happiness*, I conceive easily that it is not obtainable, first, without some competent *Knowledge of myself*, who am the Subject of it; next, without some *Knowledge of that Happiness* which is the Object of my Desire; and lastly, without the *Knowledge of the Means* that lead unto it. And therefore I conclude it may be proper enough for me to begin my Study with an Enquiry into *my own Nature*. That, I suppose, will shew me what Sort of *Happiness* I am capable of; and I presume that it will then be seasonable to look after it.

*F.* Very well. I like your Method. It is orderly. And the Prosecution of it will probably bring into Consideration whatever other Topick may be material to our Subject. Now, that we may proceed therein, I would have you reflect seriously upon what you judge most observable in yourself, and then tell me *what Manner of Thing you take yourself to be.*

*S.* I cannot but observe that where-ever I am, I fill some Place, even as all other material Things that surround me; and therefore whatever I am, I think myself to be framed of the same Matter as they are.

*F.* So far right. But do you not further perceive some Faculties in yourself which are peculiar to Mankind, and which none of those other material Things that surround us are endued with?

*S.* Yes: I have *Sense*, which is not found in Stocks and Stones. And I have further this Faculty of *thinking, reflecting, or reasoning*, wherein you now exercise me, which I take to denote some Excellency in Mankind vastly different from  
any

any Thing even in Animals, and that not only in Degree but Effence.

F. These two observations of yours imply this Definition of ourselves; *that we are thinking Substances*. But it remains still to be enquired, whether that fore-mentioned material Part of us, which you have observed to fill some Place (or, as others express it, to be extended) I say, whether that be not the very same Thing with that which thinks; and that so this thinking and reasoning be nothing else but an Effect produced by the different Modification and Motion of that Matter whereof we are composed; or, on the contrary, whether our thinking Faculty proceed from any other different and really distinct Principle. This Consideration is important. Weigh it carefully.

S. I hope I have not been too rash in hinting already, that I guess that Faculty to denote some Excellency in us essentially different from any Thing in Animals, whose Composition I suppose to be one of the perfectest Productions of modified Matter.

*F.* I do not say you have been too rash in that Assertion. But however, without determining any Thing about Animals, the Knowledge of whose Nature is of little Consequence to us, I desire to hear you explain more particularly upon what Ground you fancy any Principle in yourself to be essentially different from Matter.

*S.* If I find any Operation whatsoever in myself above the Power of Matter, I must needs conclude that it proceeds from some Principle of a different Nature.

*F.* Can you give me any Instances of such like Operations?

*S.* When I reflect upon the Nature of Matter, *its Extension, its Divisibility, its Aptitude to receive such a Variety of Modifications and Motions*, yet, into whatever Form or Motion I conceive it put, I can not for my Life find any such Thing to result from thence as that bare Sensation which I am endowed withal. Much less therefore is it to be reputed the Principle of my noble Faculties.

*F.* What

*F.* What are those noble Faculties, which you think meer Matter least capable to produce?

*S.* They are chiefly *Memory* and *Ratiocination*.

*F.* Why do you affirm that *Matter* is not capable of *Memory*?

*S.* If we were composed only of meer Matter, then all the Remembrance that we have of any Thing would be effected by material Impresses or Characters placed in that part of our Body where that Faculty resides.

*F.* I grant it. And why may we not believe that it is so?

*S.* The multitude of Things that we remember, would, upon that Supposition, require such a multitude of different Characters, that it is impossible any such part of our Body wherein that Faculty can be placed should contain them; much less could it retain them in that Order, and represent them in that Manner to our Imagination as we find we have them.

*F.* It does indeed seem absurd that so many various Things as we have in our  
Mind



Mind should have there so many distinct material Existencies. And that will appear yet the more absurd, if we observe, that amongst those Ideas which replenish our Mind, there are some of them of Things immaterial; as Truth and Falsehood, Virtue and Vice, Honour and Dishonour, and the like. . But let us go on. Explain to me now, why *Ratiocination cannot be performed by meer Matter.*

S. That needs no farther explaining than only to settle the Meaning of the Word. By *Ratiocination*, therefore, I understand that Act of the Mind, whereby, comparing together such Notions as either have been long or are but newly implanted therein, we from thence draw Consequences, and raise other Notions, which we were formerly ignorant of. Now if *Memory* alone be beyond the Power of Matter, it is past all Doubt that this further Act, which revises and compares such Things as are already in the Memory, must needs be much more so.

*F. These*



F. These Difficulties of explaining divers Operations that we find in ourselves, by the Power of Matter, I allow to be invincible. But therefore, since we are still sure that we are capable of those Operations, it remains that you explain unto me by what other Means they are performed, and *shew me that different Principle from which they proceed.*

S. Alas, you now pose me. I am not able to do it. Those very Things, *Thinking and Reasoning*, are themselves the most essential Characters that I know, of that Being which exercises them. I am only sure that I have them in myself, but how they are performed I am utterly ignorant.

F. If it be so indeed that you can go no further, yet consider now at least what all this Disquisition we have hitherto made into human Nature amounts unto, and what Consequences arise from thence for your Use.

S. My Knowledge hitherto amounts to this, that we have in us *two distinct Principles*; the one whereof is *material*,  
whose

whose eminent Property is *Extension*; the other *immaterial*, whose eminent Property is *Thought*.

*F.* Those two Principles are termed *Matter* and *Spirit*, or, in ordinary Speech, *Body* and *Soul*. Let us make Use therefore of those received Expressions. And now do you go on to tell me what Consequences you perceive to arise from this Distinction.

*S.* The most important Consequence thereof is this, that our *Bodies* and *Souls*, being of *different Natures*, are disposed for *different Enjoyments and Sufferings*. The body is not capable of those Pleasures which are peculiar to the Soul. Nor is the Soul, by any evident Necessity, to be esteemed subject unto that Change and Dissolution which attends the Body.

*F.* The Necessity of the Soul's Dissolution with the Body is indeed not evident from any thing you have observed upon their Natures. But neither is this Distinction of their Natures so full a Proof as might be wish'd for, of so comfortable

ble an Expectation as that of the Soul's Duration hereafter. As we proceed further we shall infallibly meet with other Arguments that will yet better confirm those Hopes. And other Consequences also, of no less Importance, will fall occasionally in our Way, as we come to treat of other Matters with which they are connected. In the mean while, it is Time now that we look back unto the Method which you first proposed for your Inquiries, and strive to discover *what sort of Happiness* that is, which this Nature of ours, such as we have described it, is capable of.

S. I conceive the Ground and *Substance of all bodily Happiness to consist in Health*. The Gratification of our several Appetites may indeed increase the Degrees of it, but Health is the most essential Ingredient, without which our Bodies will be always miserable. And as for the *Happiness of the Soul*, I think it may be esteemed compleat whensoever we enjoy *intire Satisfaction and Contentment of Mind*.

F. Since

*F.* Since you distinguish our Happiness into these two Kinds, it is necessary to fix the just Estimate of each of them ; that we may thereupon direct our chief Pursuit after what shall appear most important.

*S.* I have no Difficulty to determine the Happiness of the Mind, such as I have described it, to exceed that of the Body : not only because the Soul is the nobler Being, ('tis that which rules the Body) but more especially because my Idea of that Happiness is the more compleat. For *where the Mind is intirely satisfied, there is nothing wanting.* Nevertheless, I would not despise the other. For I confess the Business seems to me yet surer when both are joined. But that Consideration afflicts me : Because I observe daily, that, notwithstanding all imaginable Precautions, the Bodies of all Men are frequently afflicted with painful Diseases, and constantly obnoxious to accidental Hurts, and inevitably subject to final Decay ; which Things make that sort of Happiness imperfect, or the At-  
tainment

tainment of it impossible. I look therefore chiefly towards the other: but, alas, I look yet in vain. My Soul seems capable of it; but it knows not where to find it. I beg of you therefore to direct me speedily unto that Object of my Search; for I now despise all other Study in Comparison of it.

F. This is what I have already hinted to you, that the regular Pursuit of your Happiness would lead you into the Consideration of other Topics than those you have hitherto mentioned. Consider therefore the Nature of all Things in this visible World. Consider the Improvements that are made upon Nature, for our Conveniency, by the Art and Contrivance of ingenious Men. Are any of these Things, or all of them together, capable to confer that sort of *Happiness* which you judge to be *peculiar unto your Soul*?

S. No, they are not. For, being all of them corporeal Substances, they can have no Operation but upon my Body; or, at least, they cannot affect my Soul but by Means of those bodily Organs un-



to which it is now united. Since therefore we have concluded the Perfection of bodily Happiness to be unattainable, it is in vain for me to expect that of my Soul by those Means.

*F.* Where then will you look for it ?

*S.* I know not well. But since it is not to be found in any corporeal Existence, not is my Soul singly able to work her own Happiness out of herself, I must either find it in *something more perfect than my Soul*, or despair of ever finding it at all.

*F.* What Idea have you of any Thing more perfect than your Soul ?

*S.* I have yet no clear Idea of any such Thing. But this I am sure of, that *who-soever made my Soul is perfecter than it*. The Principle, whatever it be, from which it sprung, must contain in itself more eminent Perfections than those that I perceive to be in me.

*F.* You see how Mankind is born into this World, one Generation succeeding another ; and that we are born at once of such a double Nature as you have observed,

served, both Body and Soul. Do you therefore intend that Answer as a Mark of Respect unto me, *your Father*, as the Author or Cause of your Subsistence?

S. I am deeply sensible of the Respect I owe you. But I confess that I now look further. *'Tis not only the Principle of my own Being, but that of Mankind, which I seek for.* The Propagation thereof from Father to Son will not serve my Turn. For tho' I revolve in my Thoughts never so many thousand Ages backwards; nay, tho' I should go so far as to find one single Man, the first of all Men, from whom the Species has been derived; yet I have still the same Question to ask concerning him as concerning me. He made not himself. Who, or what, was it therefore that gave him his Being, and his Capacity to beget others like himself? whatever that was, it must necessarily contain in it great Perfections. And it can be no indifferent Thing for us to know, or to be ignorant of it. For as in the Course of Generations there is a strict Relation between Father and Son, the latter depend-

depending upon the former, and being naturally obliged to certain Duties towards him; so, much more ought we to conclude, that *the general Author of Mankind does neither abandon his Off-spring, nor leave it free from Ties of Duty.* And if I could once be so happy as to discover *him*, and pay those Duties which I owe him, I doubt not but I should therein find that further Perfection of Happiness which I search after.

*F.* I perceive this Thought has warmed you. But let us not over-shoot our Mark. You enquire after the *original Cause* of the first Man. Is that so difficult to conceive? consider the various Productions of Nature. *This Earth* whereon we live, our general Mother, being invigorated with the lively Heat of our universal Parent, *the Sun*, produces yearly innumerable Objects of equal Astonishment with this you stick at. Neither are her Productions confined to so exact a Regularity that we may not imagine her capable to have sometimes brought forth other manner of Beings than what she now ordinarily

dinarily does. The odd Irregularities that we yet meet withal ever and anon are an undeniable Proof of it. And why may not therefore *the first Production of Mankind* be attributed to the happy Rencontre of some convenient Matter, which, cherished and actuated by a due Proportion of nutritive Heat, sprung up into that Form we see it? if this do not satisfy, we shall be to seek for the *first Cause* of all other Animals as well as of ourselves, and so involved in endless Disquisitions.

S. No, no, I now perceive that our Disquisitions upon this Head will not be endless. We draw near to a Resolution of them. Tho' I should grant the Possibility of Man's Production in that Manner which you have endeavoured so plausibly to describe, that does not at all extricate me from my first Difficulty; but rather intangles me more in it, and obliges me to look further. Let it be so, that both Men and Beasts have been originally produced by the Earth and Sun. Yet, *who is it that made that Earth and Sun*, and also those other innumerable

Numbers of glorious Bodies that environ us at greater Distance? they have all had their *first Cause* as well as we. And the close Relation they have unto one another, with their Dependance upon one another, does evidently demonstrate that the first Cause of them all is one and the same. *There is one, only, original and universal Cause of all Things.* And that being so, I must raise my Idea of its Perfections yet so much higher than I first conceived them, as the universal Frame of all Things is a compleater Production than that of me in particular. This Consideration makes me conclude those *Perfections* to be no less than *infinite*.

*F.* You have rightly concluded. *That Being which formed all other Beings must of Necessity be absolutely perfect.* And that is it which we call GOD. The Evidence of this Conclusion depends upon such undeniable Principles that it cannot be doubted of. In the Order of Things that produce one another, some one must necessarily be first. Whatsoever that first be, it must contain supereminently in itself



self all those Perfections that are scattered amongst the rest. And *the uniting of those scattered Perfections makes the Idea of their Author absolutely compleat.* I have repeated these Heads that they may be firmly rooted in your Memory, that so the Foundation of this important Conclusion may never be shaken. But we must not rest here. *This Idea of God is a Fountain of Light.* Let us follow the Streams that it sends forth, and see whither they will carry us. Tell me therefore more particularly, what you conceive to be comprehended in this Notion of *a Being absolutely perfect.*

S. So great a Perfection as that is, surpasses my weak Capacity. And indeed I cannot imagine it possible for any Man, *being finite*, to comprehend the Extent of those Perfections which we have concluded to be *infinite*.

F. Tho' we cannot comprehend all, yet we may some. Attend therefore closely to the Sense of that Definition, and you will not find it difficult to descend into some Particulars.

S. Thus far indeed I think I see clearly ; that a *Being absolutely perfect must have in himself what is necessary, not only to his own Being and Happiness, but likewise to the Being and Happiness of his Creatures.*

F. That is one Step. Mind now the Consequence of that Answer, and you will advance further. But do it by Degrees. In the first Place, examine what you find to result from the first Part of your Answer, which relates simply to the Being and Happiness of God himself.

S. If he have in himself whatsoever is necessary to his own Being, (without which he can in no wise be esteemed perfect) and if he have not received any Thing from without himself, (which has been already demonstrated, in shewing that he is the first Cause of all Things) it then follows that *his Being or Existence is necessary* ; that it always has been, and that it always will be ; which is to say that *it is eternal*. Again : If he have in himself whatsoever is necessary to his own Happiness, (without which also he must fall far short of Perfection) it follows not only

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ly that his Nature is incapable of a final Dissolution, but even of any Suffering or Change; which, being Affections incident to all *Matter*, I make use of the Term you have allowed me to signify its Contrary, and call him *Spirit*. Then, joining together these two Conclusions, I say that *he is an eternal Spirit*.

F. What are the Consequences of the second Branch of your Answer, *viz.* That *he has in himself whatsoever is necessary to the Being and Happiness of his Creatures?* or rather, first, what is the Reason upon which you ground that Proposition? for it appears not so evident as the other.

S. The first Part of that Proposition is evident enough from the very Existence of the Creatures. For since they are, and are from him, it is clear that he has in himself whatsoever was or is necessary either to produce or to conserve them. And to prove the second, I need only observe wherein *the general Happiness of the Creatures consists*; which I conceive to be *in their Attainment of that End for which their Author designed them*. For it cannot

be doubted but he, who had in himself the Power to produce them, can much more easily by the same Power conduct them to that End for which he produced them. So that *I find in him the original Spring both of the Being and Happiness of all Things.*

*F.* Proceed then to draw the Inferences of that Proposition, as it relates to the Creatures.

*S.* His giving Being and Happiness unto the Creatures seems to me to imply principally his sovereign Perfection of *Goodness, of Wisdom, and of Power.* His *Goodness* is apparent in the Design of all his Works, *his Wisdom* in the Contrivance of them, and *his Power* in the Execution. The one prompts, the other directs, and the third accomplishes. These I think are the main Branches into which that Consideration may be divided: And as we can perceive the Connexion of others with these, we may safely refer them to the same original Stock of *absolute Perfection*; which is *God.*

*F.* Will you go on to particularize any others that you find to have their Rise from these?

*S.* That

S. That Pursuit would be long. And I know not whether at this Time it be very needful. For other Inferences will of themselves occur on particular Occasions. And in the mean while I perceive that we have in these three a solid Foundation of that Happiness which I am seeking after. For seeing my Notion of God's *Wisdom* assures me that he *knows* what is best, and his *Goodness* and *Power* that he is both *willing* and *able* to do it, I cannot doubt but it is *already done*.

F. What, do you mean that by this Discovery you are now actually stated in that Happiness which you was a while ago inquiring after? For that is best for you. And you seem to infer that whatsoever is best is already done.

S. No. Tho' I am assured that *whatsoever is best for the Universe is done*, yet my Comprehension of that general Good is too short to determine me in the particular Application of it. On the contrary, rather, since I find myself to be yet short of that Happiness which my Nature is capacitated for, I conclude that it is in



order to some more general Good that I am so. And, in effect, tho' I cannot comprehend the Depth of all God's Workings, yet I easily see a Possibility that it may be for the Advantage of the Whole, that some sort of Creatures pass unto their Perfection by Degrees. And probably I myself may be of that Sort. This State wherein I now am, may be a Passage. Which being so, it is sufficient for me in particular that *I am put into the Way*, and have a Capacity given me to work out in Time that further Degree of Happiness which I yet want. And that I am really in such a Condition is clearly deducible from the forementioned triple Idea of God's Perfection. For, since I am capacitated for a further Degree of Happiness than what I now enjoy, and since I am naturally bent upon the Pursuit of that Happiness, it is unconceivable that infinite Goodness, Wisdom, and Power, should have given me that Capacity and that Bent of Nature to be always frustrated. I say therefore that my Attainment of it in the End, provided I  
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swerve not from the Way, is as certain as if already effected.

F. Since you will not now pursue this Search into the particular Perfections of the Deity any further, consider with yourself once again how far we are yet come; and see, according to your own proposed Method, which Way you ought next to bend your Thoughts.

S. I can do it easily. For I take Care not to let slip that Clew which you directed me in the Beginning to hold fast. I seek my own Happiness. In order to that, I have considered what I am; what is the chief Happiness that I am capable of; and where that Happiness is to be found. I have determined that the noblest Part of my Nature is spiritual; that my chief Happiness must therefore also be spiritual; and that it can only be found in God. I have proceeded to take some View of those Perfections which the Idea of God presents unto me. And there we stick. Methinks therefore it lies now naturally before me to look after *the Way or Means that leads unto this Happiness* which I have

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proposed

proposed for the ultimate Object of my Search.

*F.* 'Tis well observed. Continue therefore to reflect attentively upon what you have hitherto discovered; and try still, in your own Thoughts, whether the Consideration thereof will direct you unto those Means or no.

*S.* I have indeed perceived some Glimmering thereof all along as we have proceeded, but now methinks I begin to discover a clearer Light. You were pleased to turn me aside as I was once hinting at the Consideration of our lying under some Ties of Duty towards the Author of our Being; and I acknowledge that you did it with Reason. For, as I had not then cleared up to my own Mind the Idea of that Author, it would have been impossible for me, in those Circumstances, to have framed any right Apprehension of my Duty towards him. But now that I have attained to some competent Knowledge both *of him and myself*, I doubt not but *from the Comparison of those Ideas I shall find some Rule of Duty to result.*

*result. And I doubt yet less that my following that Rule is the direct and only Means of bringing me to my desired Happiness.*

F. You say you doubt not of these Things. But, once again, why so fast? why may it not yet be doubted whether he has given us any such Rule or no? or, of what Importance is it to him what Course we take? We see that all Men, who follow never so various Ways of living, arrive indifferently, and without Distinction, at their last End, which is the Grave. And what Happiness then can you propose unto yourself to find in one Course rather than another?

S. I perceive that I have been too hasty, in starting a double Conclusion without explaining the Premises from whence I draw it. My Mind has run quicker than my Tongue, and has caused my Expressions to take that Leap which your Questions now bring me back again to walk over more leisurely. I must do it therefore Step by Step, and endeavour to tread sure as I go along.

F. Do

36      *The* R E L I G I O N

F. Do so. I wait your Motion.

S. I must prove then, in the first Place, that the Author of our Being, which is *God, has really obliged us unto some Duty*; in the next Place I must enquire *what that Duty is*; and in the third Place, examine *how my Happiness arises from it*. My first Proposition is general. And methinks this general Consideration may serve to clear it. If God be the Author of all Things, then *whatsoever we find ourselves obliged unto by the Nature of Things*; I mean either of God, of ourselves, or of others; *we are obliged unto it by God himself*, who framed and disposed Things in that manner.

F. Yes, if we are under any such Obligation, I will not deny but that Obligation is laid upon us by God. But how does it appear that we are under such Obligation at all?

S. If I mistake not, we have already sufficiently establish'd that, in the Beginning of our Enquiries. The Desire that every Man has to procure his own Happiness is general, and whatsoever is ge-  
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neral is natural. The Ways indeed in which Men seek it are different, and therefore some of them must necessarily be preternatural. But the general Bent after, and Desire of Happiness, is the same in all Men, and therefore *the Pursuit of it is an Obligation laid upon us by Nature herself; that is to say, a Duty enjoined us by God.*

F. Grant that the Search of Happiness in general be a natural Inclination, and by Consequence our Duty; yet, since all Men are subject to err in the particular Ways of pursuing it; what can it avail us to know in general that we are under such an Obligation, while we have no Rule to direct us in the particular Observance of it?

S. You are pleased in that Question to make a Supposition which I must not grant. The Errors of some Men do not prove that we have no Rule given us to walk by; but only that, if there be any such Rule, those Men do not observe it. And I think we have already agreed upon a Principle from which it will necessarily follow

follow that we have some such Rule given unto us, whether they observe it or no. If it be inconsistent with our Idea of God that he should have given us this Bent of Nature after Happiness, and at the same time have subjected us to a Frustration, (which I prove to be inconsistent, in that such a Frustration is real Misery, and that it is directly repugnant to his Goodness to have framed Creatures on Design to make them miserable) I say then, it is absolutely necessary that he should have given us some Rule whereby to direct us in the particular Pursuit of that Happiness, which he had obliged us to seek after; because otherways we should be for ever frustrated of it. Which is absurd.

*F.* Can you shew me *a Rule* which is *capable to guide us exactly in this Pursuit*, and which is *general to all Mankind?* for such it must be, or none.

*S.* I think I can. And if I had not guess'd at it beforehand, this last Character which you require in it is too evident a Distinction to leave any Doubt thereupon.

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In a Word, *The Rule of all our Actions is, or ought to be, Right Reason.* This Faculty of Reasoning judges of Truth and Error, of Good and Evil; weighs one Thing with another, and chuses the best. The Progress you have already helped me to make therein assures me of a greater Perfection hereafter than what I have yet attained unto. I now indeed grope after an unknown Way, and advance not without some Doubts and Fears; but I am persuaded that a continued sincere and strict Application to this Exercise will produce a steady Firmness of Judgment, capable to direct my Practice. And, above all, I say that your last fore-mentioned Character takes away all Doubts upon this Matter. For if God hath given any such Rule unto Mankind (as it hath been already proved that he must of Necessity have given some) it can be no other than this Rule of *Reason*; because none other, than this, is or can be *general*; and this being so, must therefore be esteemed *natural*; that is to say *from God*; and by Consequence also *sufficient*.

*F.* I will not just dispute against these general Arguments, which you have made use of to prove that God has obliged us under some sort of Duty, and given us the Means of knowing it. But however, I shall esteem the Thing yet better proved, as well as illustrated, when I shall see you go thro' your next proposed Enquiry with any Accuracy, and shew me those particular Duties that we are obliged unto.

*S.* To do that, I must refer our Duties unto certain principal Heads, which are very obvious, and from which all particular Branches take their Rise. They are these. *To God, to our Neighbours, and to ourselves.* And I chuse to begin with the last of them. Let us reflect therefore upon our own Nature, which we have concluded to be composed of two Principles, Matter and Spirit, or Body and Soul. These two Principles in us contest frequently between themselves, drawing several Ways. The Body delights only in the present Gratification of its Senses, without knowing any Bounds thereof, or  
foreseeing

foreseeing any Consequences. The Soul has not only its own Delights of a more refined Nature, but it also judges concerning those of the Body. It weighs a sensual Gratification with a spiritual Inconvenience, a present Good with a future Evil; and it is able upon the Comparison of all Circumstances to chuse what is most conducive to the Happiness of the whole Man. Now from this simple Consideration of our own Nature, I affirm that there results this plain Duty, incumbent upon us, *viz. That we ought to keep our Bodies in continual Subjection unto our Souls, as Servants unto their Masters.* And the Reason of that Duty will appear yet more evident by the Mischiefs that follow a contrary Practice. For where this Subordination is not established, all corporeal Gratifications grow excessive; and the Excess of such Gratification breeds endless Inconveniences. Those of Eating and Drinking cloud and darken the Understanding, by the gross Vapours which they send up into the Brain. Others enervate the Strength of  
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the Body. The very Desire of any of them with Earnestness excites Passions, breeds Disorder in the Mind, and unfits it for Deliberation. And the too frequent Indulgence thereof possesses the whole Soul, and stifles all Thoughts of any noble Enjoyment. In a Word, therefore, *it is our indispensable Duty to use great Moderation in all bodily Satisfactions, and to preserve the absolute Dominion of the Soul over the body unviolated.*

*F.* This is very well. But it is nothing else than what you said even now; that we ought to govern all our Actions by Reason.

*S.* I am very glad it is so. And I hope what I shall have Occasion to say further in the Remainder of my Researches will continue to prove so likewise: I mean that *Right Reason and True Interest will be always found to be but one and the same Thing.*

*F.* Proceed then, in your own Method, to what you think fit to explain in the next Place.

*S.* My

S. My next Task is to enquire into those particular *Duties which we are obliged unto towards our Neighbours*. And that I may discern them clearly, I judge it convenient to take a View of my own Circumstances, and of the Relations wherein I stand towards others. I consider myself as born naked into the World, uncapable to provide or help myself with the Necessaries, much less with the Conveniencies of Life; and therefore standing in absolute Need of other Assistance. From that Estate, by the Assistance of others, I grow up gradually unto some Measure of Strength, and become capable of many Things. But with all that Capacity I am yet far short of being able to provide alone for my own Subsistence. For, in Effect, that Provision implies no less than to cultivate the Earth, and prepare the Fruits of it for Food and Rayment; to kill the Beasts, and prepare likewise their Flesh for Meat, and their Skins and Fleeces for Cloathing; to dig up Stones out of the Entrails of the Earth, to hew down Trees, and build Houses  
for

for Defence against Injuries of Weather; the least of which Things requires so many Instruments wherewithal they are to be done, so much Art and Labour in the doing, that few men are capable of executing any one of them, without taking Advantage and making Use of something done by others; much less can any Man be ever capable of all. Nevertheless all these Things are so absolutely necessary for us, that it is not possible without them to preserve Life; or tho' it could be preserved, yet even Life itself in that Condition would not be desirable. This being so, I have continual Need of my Neighbour's Assistance in one Thing or another; and my Neighbour has the same Need of mine. To obtain his, I must therefore give him mine; and to obtain mine, he must give me his. It is not to be had on either Side at any other Price. Thus *the Necessity of mutual Succour ties all Mankind together in one common Bond*. It makes it as necessary for each individual Person, to endeavour the Good of the Whole, as  
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of himself in particular; because. he cannot enjoy the one, but in contributing towards the other. There is the Obligation of Interest which inforces the Duty. And our Duty resulting from hence is plainly this; *that we bear an universal Love and Good-will towards all Men.* Or more particularly, *that we look upon our Neighbour's Concernment as our own,* and that so we be as ready to serve him on any Occasion, as we desire he should be to serve us; nay, *that we look upon the general Concernment of Mankind, as far more important than our own,* and that so we prefer the Publick Good, and the Establishment thereof upon Principles of universal Rectitude, before any sinister private Advantage. This I take to be a Summary of that Law which Nature, or God, obliges us unto towards our Neighbours. And whoever carries this in his Mind, will need no great Comment to teach him his Duty in particular Occasions. This hearty Benevolence prohibits the doing all manner of Injury, and enjoins the doing all manner of Good. It  
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lays also the Foundation of Government, and it obliges us to Truth and Justice, and to all other Vertues which are necessary to the Preservation of Society. In fine, it secures the Happiness of each Man in this World, as much as that Happiness can possibly be secured. And therefore I conclude again, that *this friendly Disposition towards all Men is a reciprocal Duty, nay the Fountain of all such Duty, required of each Man by God himself.*

*F.* I will not interrupt you with any Objections. Go on to your next Head.

*S.* My next and last Head is to examine what are those particular *Duties which we owe unto God himself.* I represent therefore unto myself that Idea of absolute Perfection, which we have attributed to the Author of our Being. And the very first Sight of so dazzling an Excellency strikes me down before him in humble Adoration. The further Contemplation of it shews me my Duty of submitting patiently unto all the Dispensations of his Providence; as being assured



fured that whatever is ordered by such an *Almighty* Principle of infinite *Wisdom* and *Goodness*, cannot chuse but be for the best. I see therein the Ground of my praising him for what I have, and praying to him for what I want; because he is the Distributer of all Things. I am enamoured with the Beauty of his Perfections, and thereby drawn into an ardent Desire of enjoying those of them which are communicable, and of imitating those of them which are imitable, according to the Degree of my Capacity. That Reflection fixes my Thoughts particularly upon his *Wisdom* and *Goodness*; the first of which reminds me to *guide all my Actions by that Measure of Wisdom*, that Principle of Reason, which he has given me; the other is a new *Incitement to all Acts of Kindness towards those that are within my Reach, and to an unlimited Benevolence towards all Men*. All these Things, and all the rest that I have deduced from former Heads, are enforced upon me by the Authority of this supreme Lawgiver. And this is *the Perfection of*  
all

## 48 The RELIGION

*all my Duties, that I perform them in Obedience to his Command, and with so exact a Sincerity, as may give me Confidence before him, who beholds the inmost Secrets of my Heart.*

F. Methinks you have omitted, upon this last Head, to shew how these particular Duties towards God come to have the Force of a Law upon us. At least you have not done it, as in the former Heads, by shewing their Connexion with our Interest.

S. If I have not done it so expressly as I should have done, yet I think I have tacitly implied it. Besides that all those Duties I have hinted at are evident Means of rendering me acceptable unto my Maker, and consequently of obtaining the Fruits of his Favour, which must needs include a high Degree of Happiness; I say, besides that, the last ingredient which I required in all our Duties (I mean that of Sincerity) does carry along with it its own Reward, *viz.* that Satisfaction of Mind which is not otherwise to be had, and which we have some while ago

ago concluded to be the highest Degree of Happiness that we can here attain unto. So that this Set of Duties, as well as the rest, have the *Inforcement of Interest to make them a Law.*

F. Well; since you have now gone tho' your proposed Classes of Duty, I will at this Time take a little Review of what you have said; that we may see whether any Difficulty yet remains, and what further is to be enquired after. Upon our Moderation in corporal Enjoyments, and the apt disposition of our bodily Organs, follows a Clearness of Mind, capable to direct us in the Choice and Prosecution of our greatest Good. Upon our Kindness towards others, follows their Kindness towards us, and the Effects of that mutual Kindness are private Conveniency, and publick Security. Upon our humble and sincere Adoration of an all-seeing God, follows that inward Comfort and Satisfaction of Mind which surpasses all meer worldly Felicity. And upon the contrary of all these Practices, follow the contrary Inconveniencies. So

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that

*that our Obligation unto these natural Duties, is confirmed by the natural Effects of their Observance or Neglect; that is to say, by Rewards and Punishments.* This is the Substance of your Discourse upon those Heads. Let us now examine if it be clear and uncontestable. I ask you therefore; do these Consequences so necessarily follow their Premises, these Effects their Causes, that whoever practices those Duties, cannot fail to obtain that Happiness, and who neglects them, to fall into those Inconveniences that we have discoursed of?

S. I must acknowledge that those two first sorts of Happiness, which I have described, as appertaining to the two first Classes of Duty, do not indeed so necessarily follow those Duties, but that they may sometimes fail. The Soul has not so absolute a Superiority over the Body, as not to be sometimes disturbed thereby in her Functions. And the kindest-natured Persons are sometimes exposed both to Want and Injury. Nevertheless those Duties are the plain and ordinary

ordinary Means to avoid these Inconveniences. The first of them goes as far as the Frailty of our Bodies can admit; and the second would be infallible, if it were universally received. The Rule therefore must not be wholly rejected, because of some few Exceptions; especially, when those exceptions arise (as here) from extraneous Causes. But however that be, the Condition of Integrity, which I mentioned under the last Classis of Duty, and required as a necessary Circumstance in all the rest, does necessarily and infallibly produce the Happiness which I ascribed to in. *An upright Conscience establishes the Mind in an unshaken Peace, and fills it with Joys unspeakable.* That therefore supplies the Deficiency of the rest, and is an Inforcement sufficient to make the Law, which enjoins all the forementioned Duties, indispensable. For tho' it do not give an absolutely compleat Happiness, a Happiness without any Alloy, yet it gives the best that our Nature in this World is capable of.



52    *The*    R E L I G I O N

F. This would indeed be well, if it were really found to be so in Practice as you imagine it in Idea. But I doubt it is otherwise. Nay I must tell you plainly, that in the Course of this World, the Despisers of those Rules do oft times seem to enjoy that very Felicity which the Observers of them seek in vain. *Those that indulge themselves in bodi'y Excesses*, have nevertheless their spiritual Faculties both quick and strong. *Those that have no Bowels of Tendernefs* towards their Brethren, advance themselves in Riches, Honour and Power, by Fraud and Violence. And *those that have no Sense of a Deity*, content themselves in these worldly Successes; and so enjoy Tranquillity of Mind, without looking any further. These Things being so, you will do well to consider, whether they do not in some measure invalidate your Reasonings, or interfere with your Conclusions.

S. Yes, they seem indeed to do it. For if the Reward of Duty do not follow upon the Performance of Duty, but rather upon a Practice directly contrary

unto

unto it, then are all the Ties of Duty broken, and Mankind let loose to all manner of Disorders. I say this seems to be the Consequence of that State of Things, which you have now represented. But I think I have the Solution of that Difficulty ready at hand. And, first, from the Absurdity of that Consequence, I argue in general, that the Thing is either not so as you have represented it, or else that that Consequence is not necessary. For, if there were no Restraint of an inward Law in the Hearts of Men, with regard to the general Good, then would all Means of obtaining a private Advantage, be indifferently made use of, as they might appear likely to give Success; and by that Means Fraud and Violence, which reign now but in some few disorderly Persons, would then overspread the Earth, and expose all Mankind to eternal Confusion, or utter Ruin: Which Consequence I say is so inconsistent with the infinite Wisdom and Goodness of God, that it is no wise to be admitted. I proceed therefore to a

more particular Examination of the Question: And, in the next place, *I deny the Supposition, that those Men of Excess and Violence, those that have no Regard either to God or Man, do ever attain to any competent Degree of Happiness.* They may indeed accumulate Riches, and other worldly Enjoyments, but that is all they can do. Their Excesses will infallibly, by Degrees, obscure and weaken their Intellects; and the Conscience of the Wrong they do unto others will gnaw their Minds, with Jealousies and Fears of the like Returns from those they have injured: Which is more than sufficient to corrupt their Joys. If they have any Intervals of Tranquillity, it proceeds only from a stupid Senselessness; and not being built upon a true Knowledge of their own Condition, nor supported by any Idea of the Deity, it can be of no Durance. Thus all their pretended Happiness dwindles into a meer Nothing, and so leaves the Objection arising from it without any Force. But if it should still be urged, that these  
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worldly Enjoyments are so accommodated to our worldly Condition, that, in spite of all Reasoning, our very Sense will force us to acknowledge that they are necessary Ingredients to our Happiness here; and if it be thereupon argued, that the unequal Distribution of them takes away the Force of that Law which I have all along endeavoured to establish: To this I will answer, in the last Place, by conceding the Supposition, and denying the Consequence. Grant that deceitful and violent Men obtain a greater share of those Things than the Candid and Benign do—What then? I must not immediately reject Things already proved; but rather first try whether this Supposition be really inconsistent therewithal or no. And in reflecting thereupon, I think I see their Agreement so easy, and so happy, that, instead of loosening any Joint of my Fabrick, it will prove the last Pin to fasten all the Parts of it indissolubly. I review therefore my Idea of the Divine Perfections, and from the *Conjunction of Wisdom and Goodness* I find

another of equal Evidence (not yet named) to result; and that is *Justice*. By his Justice I am assured, that, *if he has obliged us unto any sort of Duty by the Expectation of Reward, and forbidden the contrary by Fear of Punishment, he will not, he can not, fail to confer that Reward upon all those that shall perform that Duty, and inflict that Punishment upon the Transgressors of it.* Since therefore it happens that this Retribution of Rewards and Punishments in this World, however considerable in general, yet is not so perfectly exact in every particular, as to be void of all Difficulty; I hereupon call to Mind the hopes I saw of *a future Being*, when I considered the Nature of my Soul as capable of it; and now I see not only that *Possibility*, but even an *absolute Necessity of the Thing*. For if God be perfectly just, and if the Rewards and Punishments, which his Justice engages him to distribute or inflict, be not distributed or inflicted in this World, we must necessarily have some **S**ubsistence hereafter, in which Estate he may distribute

or



or inflict them; and he then will certainly and infallibly do it. This, I say, not only answers your Objection, but it adds a new Force to all that I have hitherto endeavoured to establish.

F. I acknowledge it does so. And therefore I will now trouble you with no more Objections, but expect the Prosecution of what you have further proposed unto yourself to enquire into.

S. Truly I do not see what further I have to prosecute. I had indeed propounded to examine how my Happiness, that perfect Happiness which I thirst after, would result from the Observance of those Duties that I am bound unto; but you have already brought me to the Resolution of that Enquiry: For, *Since the Almighty God is obliged by his own essential Properties, upon Condition of that Observance, to confer that Happiness upon me in a future Life; I have but to walk steadily in the Way that he has prescribed* (I mean in that Way which the Nature of Things, the Course of universal Good,

obliges me to) *and I am assured that I shall not fail to obtain it.*

*F.* Add only one Word further, and tell me *what sort of Happiness that is which you expect to obtain in another Life,* and I have done.

*S.* It is impossible for me to describe that future Happiness, in such a Manner as those Things may be represented, that are the Objects of my Senses, or Matter of present Enjoyment. But it suffices me to know that *it will be suited to my Soul; and therefore it will advance the Faculties of my Soul to their highest Degree of Perfection, which is to say, into a conformity unto the Divine Nature, from whence they sprung: And that its Duration will be eternal.* This is an Abyss in which my Thoughts are drowned: No wonder therefore if Expressions fail me.

*F.* I expect no more from you. You have followed your natural Light, so far as it shines with any Clearness. What further remains to be known, that may be useful in the Pursuit of Happiness, has been communicated to Mankind by  
*Divine*

Divine Revelation, and is therefore a Subject of Instruction, rather than Reflection: It is rather to be listned unto, than studied for. I will therefore some other time endeavour to explain unto you my Conception of those Things. But in the mean while I advise you to revolve oft in your own Mind the Force of all these Considerations that we have now gone thorough. They will ingage you to an exact Performance of your Duty on all Occasions. And *the Performance of that Duty will not only carry along with it the Reward of a temporal Felicity, but secure an eternal one.*

S. Dear Sir, I beg of you not to defer the Instruction you promise me, until another Time. Since, there remains further Matter to be inquired into. I can have no Rest till I have discuss'd it. My mind is now so warmed with these Things, that there can be no Time fitter for me than the present, to continue the Meditation of them. And besides also, we are already so far advanced upon our Way, that I cannot think our remaining

Journey will be very long. I earnestly intreat you therefore to continue your Instructions, without Interruption, to the End. And seeing I am, henceforwards, to learn more directly by your Lessons, than heretofore, while you were pleased to lead me in the Exercise of my own Reflections; I desire you now to suffer me to propose such Enquiries as I find myself least capable to comprehend; that so your Lessons, being properly suited to my Wants, may the more easily supply them, and remove all Doubts or Difficulties that shall arise.

*F.* Seeing you are not wearied with this Conversation, I am not only willing, but shall take Pleasure to continue it. I approve also of the Method you hint at, of your proposing, and my resolving, what Questions or Difficulties you may find needful. The Pursuit thereof, with such Attention of Mind as you have hitherto exercised, will still lead us in a natural Order, unto the End of our Way. Do you therefore, at this Time, act the Part  
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of the *Catechizer* ; I am content to be the *Respondent*.

S. That Condescension is suitable to your accustomed Goodness: and I shall use my utmost Care, in the Acceptance thereof, not to transgress the Bounds of my Duty. The first Difficulty then, that I desire to propound, arises from your last Words. Since you acknowledge that those Discoveries which are made by the *Light of Nature*, are capable to conduct a Man to eternal Felicity, *I do not readily perceive what further Need there was of any other Discovery by divine Revelation, nor what Need there is now* (I say, upon that Supposition) *for me to look into it.*

F. The Need of some further Help than what the meer *Light of Nature* affords us, is urgent upon two Accounts. The one, *to open our Understandings*, the other, *to incline our Wills*. These Discoveries that we have thereby made, are the Effect of deep Meditation, which the vulgar sort of People are not capable of. They therefore have Need to be instructed therein by some Person of such Credit as  
may



may deserve to be trusted upon his Word. And as for those who discern these Things in some Measure, by the Strength of Reason, even they, too frequently, do either slip or break the fine-spun Thread of their own Consequences, and stand in Need of a stronger Force to subject them unto their Duty.

S. I now perceive that Necessity ; and therefore intreat you, in the next Place, to shew me how it has been supplied.

F. This has been admirably done by the coming of *Jesus Christ* into the World, by his *Doctrine, his Life, his Miracles, his Death and Resurrection*. 'Tis, in a Word, the *Christian Religion* which gives us new Degrees both of *Light* and *Strength*, surpassing those of common Nature.

S. You will oblige me in explaining these Things more particularly.

F. Remember then that you have already demonstrated, that *to obtain the perfect Happiness we aspire unto, there are no other Means afforded us than the hearty and sincere Compliance with those Duties that are required from us*. I say, there are no  
other

other Means that we ourselves can make use of, or, at least, that can be effectual without this. For whatever other Motives may have influenced *the secret Counsels of the Almighty*, to incline him to bestow that Happiness upon any Number of Men, they are above our Comprehension, and ought therefore to be *discourged of with great Reservedness*, or rather *admir'd in humble Silence*. We are taught that *' secret Things belong unto the Lord our God; but those Things which are revealed belong unto us, and our Children, for ever; that we may do all the Words of this Law*. That being so, I will undertake no further than to consider how the coming of Jesus Christ into the World is helpful to us in the Performance of those Duties which we have determined to be the only Way which leads unto Happiness.

S. I desire also nothing further. For I comprehend already, that the uniting, in this Manner, *revealed and natural* religion (if in Effect they are capable of such an Union) will render the whole Business

<sup>1</sup> Deut. 20. 29.

of

64      *The*   R E L I G I O N

of Religion so uniform, that I shall the more easily digest it in my Mind, and have need to make the fewer Objections. Wherefore I beseech you to continue your own Design.

*F.* In the first Place, I say, that *the Doctrine of Jesus Christ affords us one very great Help* towards the Performance of our Duty, in that it aims at the greatest *Purity*, and is delivered with the greatest *Perspicuity* imaginable. None that read his Sermon upon the Mount, or the other Instructions that are interspersed throughout his whole History, and the other Writings of his Disciples, but may clearly understand what is required from them.

<sup>2</sup> *Spiritual Adoration.*   <sup>3</sup> *Purity and Integrity of Heart.*   <sup>4</sup> *Unblameableness of Life and Conversation.*   <sup>5</sup> *A conscience void of Offence both towards God and towards Men.*

These Principles are frequently inculcated throughout the whole New-Testament,

<sup>2</sup> John iv. 24.   <sup>3</sup> Matt. v. 8. Cor. v. 8.   <sup>4</sup> Phil. ii. 15.   1 Thes. ii. 10.   1 Tim. v. 7.   1 Pet. ii. 12.  
<sup>5</sup> Aët. xxiv. 16.   2 Cor. i. 12.   1 Pet. iii. 21.  
 1. John. iii. 19, 20.

and

and explained in numerous Instances of particular Duties. But the Effence of all is said to be <sup>6</sup> *Love*; which our *Saviour* himself extending both to *God* and <sup>7</sup> *Man*, teaches us that thereupon depend both the *Law* and the *Propbets*. Intensively, <sup>8</sup> *towards God, our Love must be superlative*; extensively, *towards* <sup>9</sup> *Man, it must be universal*. In a Word, the Sum of all his Instructions is reduced to these three Heads of <sup>10</sup> *living soberly, righteously, and godly*, which are the very same into which you did even now distribute our Duty. But nevertheless, the Advantage Mankind receives by our Saviour's <sup>11</sup> teaching that same Doctrine is very great; because he has done it with a *Clearness suited to the meanest Capacity, and with an* <sup>12</sup> *Evidence irresistible*

S. I acknowledge that Advantage really great; but as you have hinted also at some others, I humbly intreat you to continue to illustrate them.

<sup>6</sup> Rom. xiii. 8, 10. 1 John ii. 9. &c. <sup>7</sup> Matt. xxii. 37. &c. <sup>8</sup> Matt. x. 37. Luke xiv. 26. <sup>9</sup> Matt v. 43. <sup>10</sup> Tit. ii. 12. <sup>11</sup> Matt. xi. 25. 1 Cor. i. 26, 27. <sup>12</sup> Matt. vii. 29. Luke iv. 32. 1 Cor. ii. 4.

## 66    *The*    R E L I G I O N

*F.* The next *Advantage* that I observed to accrue unto *Mankind* by *Jesus Christ* arises from his *Life*. He has in that given us an Example of Obedience to the Will of God, both in <sup>13</sup> *doing* and in <sup>14</sup> *suffering*: An Example of <sup>15</sup> *Humility*, <sup>16</sup> *Purity*, and <sup>17</sup> *Meekness of Spirit*: An example of <sup>18</sup> *Love* and <sup>19</sup> *Benevolence towards one another*: A <sup>18</sup> perfect Example, in respect of every Duty that he requires from us; and an Example which *we ought therefore to* <sup>20</sup> *follow*. This is an Advantage that was not afforded either to *Jews* or *Heathens*. And it is no small one. For it both removes all Doubts that might have risen about the Interpretation of his Commands, by shewing us the Meaning in their Performance; and it strengthens us against all Difficulties that might have appeared therein, by shewing us that Performance accomplished by one *who was in all* <sup>20</sup> *Things made like unto us, and sub-*

<sup>13</sup> Matt. iii. 15. John xvii. 4.    <sup>14</sup> Matt. xxvi. 39. Luke xxii. 42. Heb. ii. 10. 1 Pet. ii. 23.  
<sup>15</sup> Phil. ii. 7, 8.    <sup>16</sup> 1 Pet. ii. 22.    <sup>17</sup> Matt. xi. 29. 2 Cor. x. 1.    <sup>18</sup> John xv. 12, 13.    <sup>19</sup> Act. x. 38.    <sup>20</sup> Pet. i. 15.    <sup>21</sup> John xiii. 15. 1 John ii. 6.



*jeet unto the same Infirmities as ourselves,  
yet <sup>21</sup> without Sin.*

S. I acquiesce in this also ; and shall listen with Pleasure to the rest of your Observations.

F. A third *Advantage* arising unto Mankind by Jesus Christ, is from the Consideration of those Miracles that were wrought by him. That Testimony was necessary to make his Doctrine more easily received, For <sup>22</sup> without Signs and Wonders Men would not assent to it. But when they saw the Miracles which he did, they <sup>23</sup> believed in him, and concluded that he was a Teacher <sup>24</sup> sent from God, because (said <sup>1</sup> they) no Man could do such Things, except God were with him. Thus God <sup>2</sup> approved him unto the World by Miracles, and Wonders, and Signs, which he wrought amongst them : And that gave him Credit and <sup>3</sup> Authority above other Doctors, and added an extraordinary <sup>4</sup> Power unto his Words.

<sup>22</sup> Heb. ii. 17. <sup>23</sup> Heb. iv. 15. <sup>24</sup> Matt. xii. 38. John iv. 48. 1 Cor. i. 22. <sup>1</sup> John ii. 23. John vi. 14. <sup>2</sup> Matt. xi. 2. &c. Luke vii. 19. &c. <sup>3</sup> John iii. 2. <sup>4</sup> A&t ii. 22. <sup>5</sup> Matt. vii. 29. Mark. i. 22. <sup>6</sup> Luke iv. 32.

S. This

S. This indeed is of great Weight; and that not only in itself, but it adds also a new Force unto your two foregoing Remarks. For when *Jesus Christ* had both taught and shewn Men what they were to do, they might still have demanded (as indeed some of them did) *by what Authority he required those Things at their Hands.* But when, by the visible Effects of his divine Power, he had demonstrated unquestionably his divine Commission, it was hard then to refuse Subjection unto him.

F. You observe well. But *the greatest Force of all the evangelical Dispensation remains yet behind.* It lies in that clear Evidence that he has given us of *a future Life,* in which we are to expect either *Rewards* or *Punishments* answerable to our Conduct in this. That was also requisite to make his Law still more obligatory. And the great Advantage we have by him, above all the discoveries of natural Light, is that the one gave but faint Glimmerings of

<sup>7</sup> Matt. xxi. 23. &c. Mark xi. 28. &c. Luke xx. 2. &c.

that

that Truth; but the other has cleared it up like Noon-day, beyond all Possibility of doubting. He taught it plainly, *declaring that his <sup>8</sup> Kingdom was not of this World; exhorting us to lay up our <sup>9</sup> Treasure in Heaven, where it would be secure and incorruptible; shewing us that the Means of getting an <sup>10</sup> Entrance there, was by the Practice of those Vertues that he had required; and that those who did <sup>11</sup> Good should, at the last Day, come forth unto the Resurrection of Life, but those who did Evil, unto the Resurrection of Damnation.* This I say, was his Doctrine. And the Belief of this being of the greatest Importance, he was not content to confirm it, only by that general Credit which his other Miracles acquired him; but he also <sup>10</sup> foretold both his own Death and Resurrection, and after having suffered the one, he <sup>11</sup> accomplished the other; that so he might, by a peculiar Miracle, adapted to the very Case,

<sup>8</sup> John xviii. 36. <sup>9</sup> Matt. vi. 20. Luke xii. 33. <sup>10</sup> Matt. xxv. 31. &c. <sup>11</sup> John v. 29. <sup>12</sup> Matt. xvii. 22, 23. Mar. ix. 31. Luke xviii. 32, 33. Matt. xx. 18, 19. <sup>13</sup> Matt. xxviii. 6, Act. i. 3.

prove the Truth of this Doctrine, even by ocular Demonstration. Thus it is, that *by him Life* <sup>14</sup> *and Immortality are brought to Light.* Not only his own, but ours. For *that is the* <sup>15</sup> *Consequence the Apostles always firmly maintained.* And the Application they made of that Consequence to Practice was, that those who admitted it, should live answerably to the Hopes it gave them; that is to say, <sup>16</sup> *soberly, righteously, and godlily, in all* <sup>17</sup> *holly Conversation* <sup>18</sup> *blameless and without Spot,* <sup>19</sup> *cleansed from all Filthiness of Flesh and Spirit, perfecting Holiness in the Fear of God, and* <sup>20</sup> *purifying themselves, even as God is pure; to the end that by such* <sup>21</sup> *strict Continuance in well doing they might obtain eternal Life.*

S. You have great Reason to represent this, as *the utmost Force of the Gospel.* It is indeed the same in kind with that, wherewithal I concluded my Disquisitions, but

<sup>14</sup> 2 Tim. i. 10.    <sup>15</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 12. 1 Thes. iv. 14. 1 Pet. i. 3.    <sup>16</sup> Tit. ii. 12, 13.    <sup>17</sup> 2 Pet. iii. 11.    <sup>18</sup> 2 Pet. iii. 14.    <sup>19</sup> 2 Cor. vii. 1.    <sup>20</sup> 1 Joh. iii. 3.    <sup>21</sup> Rom. ii. 7.

infinitely

infinitely stronger, and more proper to incline Mens Wills, and bind them to the exact Performance of their Duty. And now I am satisfied that these several Advantages, which as you say occur unto us by *Jesus Christ*, do perfectly supply those Defects and Imperfections, under which our natural Condition laboured. But that being so, I perceive the great Importance of another Enquiry, which might indeed more naturally have preceded these Explications of yours, but is not yet unseasonable. It is this. Seeing the *Gospel of Jesus Christ* is so proper and efficacious a Means, to direct and help us in those Ways which lead to eternal Happiness, I would gladly know by what kind of Proof we may be fully assured of its Truth : I mean, that *such Things were really said and done, as are therein recorded*. For there lies the Stress of the whole Matter. And it behoves us to see that the Foundations be very sure, upon which we build so important a Structure as this is.

F. You



F. You judge rightly of the great Importance of the Enquiry you now make, For if the *History of Jesus Christ* be not true, then are all Consequences drawn from thence vain and frivolous. But if it be true that he *said* and *did* what the *Evangelists* record of him, then are all my foregoing Conclusions strong. Now the Proof hereof appears to me most evident in the *historical Series* of what followed his Appearance. It is Matter of Fact that we enquire after: viz. *That he liv'd, and taught, as is recorded of him; and that he confirmed his Teaching during his Life by Miracles; and much more after his Death, by his Resurrection.* This is attested by the *Apostles, Disciples, and primitive Christians*: In whom therefore we are to examine two Things: First, Their *Capacity* to judge of what they saw and heard, (I mean only that they did really see and hear it;) and then their *Fidelity* in reporting it. Now the *Capacity* necessary to discern such apparent Matters of Fact, as are the Foundation of Christianity, is so small, that every

Man

Man of common Sense is sufficiently endowed with it; and therefore it cannot be doubted of in those Witnesses. Their *Fidelity* has several Confirmations; as, *The exemplary Purity and Unblamableness of their* <sup>22</sup> *Carriage in all other Respects; their* <sup>23</sup> *Disinterestedness even in this Respect, in that they sought no worldly Advantage by their Testimony; nay more, their suffering all manner of* <sup>24</sup> *Persecution, and even* <sup>1</sup> *Death itself, for Confirmation of its Truth; and finally the concurrent Testimony from Heaven* which accompanied their Ministry, by enabling them (even as *Christ* himself) to work *Signs* <sup>2</sup> *and Wonders and divers Miracles.* Let this be applied to those who were themselves Eye-witnesses of our Saviour's Performances, those many thousands who saw and believed in him. Then let us look into the Fruit of their Ministry, *the historical Series of Things*, as I even now called it. After his Death *these Witnesses spread themselves*

<sup>22</sup> 2 Cor. i. 12. 1 Thes. ii. 10. <sup>23</sup> Act. ii. 33. 34. 2 Thes. iii. 8. <sup>24</sup> Act. viii. 1. 1 Cor. iv. 11, 12. 2 Tim. iii. 11. <sup>1</sup> Act. vii. 58. &c. <sup>2</sup> Mark, xvi. 20. Act. xix. 11. 12. Heb. ii. 4.

into several <sup>3</sup> Regions, and Countries; and <sup>4</sup> Millions were convinced of the Truth of their Report, by the irresistible Evidence which they gave of it. These Millions again produced others, being all accompanied with a divine <sup>5</sup> Blessing, and very many (during the first Ages) with a <sup>6</sup> divine Power, so long till Christianity overspread, in a manner, the Face of the whole Earth. This is plain Matter of Fact. The Records of these Things, whether in the Gospel itself, or in the <sup>7</sup> Histories of the next succeeding Ages, do all agree in the same Account thereof. And since that Time, those Records have, through the Succession of several Ages, been conveyed unto us, with the same, or greater, Certitude than any other History of such Antiquity can boast of. I say, not only with the same, but greater Certitude. For the Memorials of other Histories, are now no where to be found

<sup>3</sup> Aët. viii. 4. 5. Aët. xi. 19. Aët. xvi. 8. &c. Aët. xxvii. 1. Aët. xxviii. 12. &c. <sup>4</sup> Aët. ii. 41. Aët. iv. 4. <sup>5</sup> 2 Cor. x. 4. <sup>6</sup> Aët. iv. 31. Aët. x. 44. Rom. xv. 19. <sup>7</sup> See the Authors quoted below Folio 69.

but in Books or Monuments. Not only Emperors are dead, but their Empires also are buried in a Chaos of Vicissitudes : So that there remains no living Witness, no real Effect now operating upon the Minds of Men, that can be an Argument they ever subsisted. But with the History of *Jesus Christ* it is otherwise. *For the World is yet full of living Christians. And therefore it cannot be doubted, that Jesus Christ had once an Existence amongst Men.* Unless some other Reason could be assigned for the spreading of his Name and Religion throughout the Earth, and the propagating of it from Generation to Generation, than what I have now touched at, it must be allowed that these two Propositions, viz. That *there are now Christians in the World*, and that *their first Author was Jesus Christ*, are chained together by the same Necessity as *Effect and Cause*. But none have yet dared to undertake so manifest an Absurdity. Even the boldest *Atheists*, who have attempted to give some Account of the Existence of the Universe without the

Concurrence of 'a Deity, have not presumed to give the least Explanation, how it could be possible there should be now any such People as *Christians* in the World, if there had not once been such a Person as *Jesus Christ*. Therefore it is even as absurd to doubt that he once was (together with the formentioned Consequences of his Being) as to doubt that we ourselves now are. This is but a light Touch at some of those numerous Arguments which the Subject affords. But the Importance of it deserves your strictest Application in examining them all. Wherefore I recommend those *Authors*, who have expressly treated this Matter, to your most serious Study. In them you will find all these Allegations that I hint at, and much more to the same Purpose, both proved and illustrated. Many there are who have laboured in that Province: But it shall suffice me now to address you unto those that I am myself best acquainted withal. They are, the incomparable *Grotius*, in his excellent Treatise *of the Truth of the Christian Religion* :



ligion: Our Countryman Dr. Parker in his *Demonstration of the divine Authority of the Law of Nature and of the Christian Religion*; and the French Mounſieur Abbadie, in his Treatiſe (alſo) *of the Truth of the Chriſtian Religion*. Theſe Authors have all handled this Subject, in their different Methods, with ſo much Strength and Clearneſs, that I cannot forbear to affirm (in Dr. Parker's Words) that *they are ſufficient to give Satisfaction, in that Point, to any reaſonable, or almoſt to any unreaſonable, Man.*

S. I am much obliged to you for giving me this preſent Proſpect of the *Proofs of the Chriſtian Religion*, and ſhall not fail to obſerve your Directions in the further *Study of thoſe Authors* that you recommend unto me. Nothing is ſo important as this; and therefore nothing ſhall have ſo much of my Care. This is indeed ſo very important, that, ſuppoſing a Satisfaction therein; I ſcarce know any Thing elſe worth the while to inquire after. And if I could perfectly attain to that Freedom from all Preoccu-

pation which you required from me in the Beginning of this Entertainment, I should certainly here cease from troubling you with any further Difficulties. For I must acknowledge that I have now none left but such as arise from those confused Notions which I had formerly perhaps too carelessly heaped together. Nevertheless I confess that some of them yet stick with me: And the little Relation that I can find they have unto this even Path, wherein you conduct me, leaves yet some Relicks of Uneasiness in my Mind.

*F.* Fear not to propound them, whatever they are. We shall perhaps find some more easy, and more general Way to solve them than you are aware of.

*S.* If it be so indeed, that *the Way to eternal Happiness lies only in the strict Performance of those Duties which the Nature of Things and the Law of God requires from us*; what shall we then say to all that *ceremonial Outside of Religion*, which bears so glorious an Appearance in the Eyes of the World? How shall we esteem all  
those

those *notional Systems of Theology, those numerous Articles of speculative Belief*, that have little or no Influence upon our Practice? And lastly, what shall we judge of the Condition of those *Persons who fall short of that Perfection in Practice, which these Rules require*? I know you see the full Extent of these Questions, and therefore I desire not to descend into Particulars; but chuse rather to leave them in this general Form, that they may be the more fit to receive that general Answer which you make me expect.

F. You do very well. But now, before I enter upon that Answer, I think fitting to premise one Word in further Confirmation of your Supposition, that *our eternal Happiness does depend upon the Performance of our Duty*. Tho' that Supposition be the plain Consequence of the strictest Reasoning we have been able to make by our natural Light, yet it will be useful unto us to observe also what Ground it has in Scripture. For we must remember that the View we are now taking of Religion is properly to be con-

80      *The* RELIGION

fin'd to that Knowledge we have of it by divine Revelation. And in this Method I think I shall establish the same Conclusion by as clear Testimony as it is possible for Words to express. If we examine it (*first*) by those figurative Expressions, of <sup>1</sup> knowing Christ, of <sup>2</sup> loving Christ, of <sup>3</sup> believing in Christ, of <sup>4</sup> being in Christ, of <sup>5</sup> being born of God, and the like, which all import a Title to future Happiness, we shall find no other Mark whereby to know that we are in such a Condition, than by our Obedience to God's Commandments. Again; if we look into the great End of Jesus Christ's Coming into the World, we shall find indeed that it was to save us. But how? By sanctifying us. It is said, that he became the Author of <sup>6</sup> eternal Salvation. But to whom? To <sup>7</sup> them that obey him. He offered himself a Sacrifice, and bear our Sins in his own

<sup>1</sup> 1 John ii. 3, &c. <sup>2</sup> John xiv. 21. John xv. 10, 14. <sup>3</sup> 1 John ii. 5. <sup>4</sup> John vi. <sup>5</sup> Jam. ii. 14. <sup>6</sup> 1 John v. 5. <sup>7</sup> Rom. viii. 1. Gal. v. 24. <sup>8</sup> 1 John ii. 6. <sup>9</sup> Rom. viii. 14. <sup>10</sup> 1 John v. 4, 18. <sup>11</sup> 1 John ii. 29. <sup>12</sup> 1 John iii. 9. <sup>13</sup> Matt. i. 21. Acts iii. 26. Eph. v. 25, &c. <sup>14</sup> 1 John iii. 5. <sup>15</sup> Heb. v. 9.

*Body*

*Body on the Tree.* But why? *That we might be* <sup>8</sup> *sanctified by his Offering, and that being* <sup>9</sup> *dead unto Sin we should live unto Righteousness.* He redeemed us also; it is true: But from what? From <sup>10</sup> *Iniquity*: And only consequentially thereunto from Punishment. This we must needs take to be the Sense of those Expressions, and that *the great Design of his Appearance was to* <sup>11</sup> *destroy the Works of the Devil.* For it is expressly said, that *nothing* <sup>12</sup> *unclean shall in any wise enter into the new Jerusalem.* and that *no Man without* <sup>13</sup> *Holiness shall see God.* And hence it is that *Jesus Christ* himself so plainly tells us, that *it is not* <sup>14</sup> *every one that saith unto him Lord Lord,* (which is to say, that acknowledges him to be the *Messiah*, or that believes in him so far only as to pray unto him, and to expect Salvation by him) *that shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that doth the will of the*

<sup>8</sup> Heb. x. 10. <sup>9</sup> Heb. ix. 14. <sup>1</sup> Pet. ii. 24.  
<sup>10</sup> Tit. ii. 14. <sup>1</sup> Pet. i. 18. <sup>11</sup> 1 John iii. 8.  
<sup>12</sup> Rev. xxi. 27. <sup>13</sup> Heb. xii. 14. <sup>14</sup> Matt. vii.  
 21, 22.



*Father who is in Heaven.* And the *Apostles* also, therefore, so carefully precaution us against the *Mistake of thinking that the* <sup>15</sup> *bearing of the Law could profit us any thing without the doing of it.* Let no man deceive you (says <sup>16</sup> one of them) *be that doth Righteousness is righteous, and he that committeth Sin is of the Devil:* And <sup>17</sup> another, *be not deceived, God is not mocked, for whatsoever a Man soweth, that shall he also reap.* There lies the Strefs of all: It is in doing. Or if this be not yet sufficient to prove it, we have but to reflect, in the last Place, upon those *Conditions by which the Scripture declares we shall be judged at the last Day.* What are those Conditions that will be then demanded in us, so as that with them we shall be received into Happiness, and without them condemned unto Misery? In one Word, *they are nothing else but good* <sup>18</sup> *Works.* Works of Piety, and of Cha-

<sup>15</sup> Rom. ii. 13. <sup>16</sup> Jam. i. 22. <sup>17</sup> 1 Joh. iii. 7, 8.  
<sup>18</sup> Gal. vi. 7. <sup>19</sup> Ps. lxii. 12. Jer. xxxii. 19. Eccl. xii. 13, 14. Ezek. xviii. 26, &c. Ezek. xxxiii. 10, &c. Matt. xvi. 27. Matt. xxv. 14, &c. Rom. ii. 5, &c. 2 Cor. v. 10. Rev. xx. 12, &c.

*riety.* Such *works* as we have already found to be required from us, both by the *natural and written Law of God.* The Places that witness this Truth are full and clear: Wherefore I refer them (with all others that I hint at) to your careful Perusal. And I think I may now conclude this Point firmly established; That *the Performance of our Duty is the only Means by which we can expect Success in the Working out our Happiness.* Tho' I had hinted at this before, yet your last Questions have made me think it needful to repeat and fortify it.

S. And I cannot but acknowledge that tho' I was also in a great measure persuaded of it before, yet I have now received a new Satisfaction in this clearer Conviction. But I see not yet the Use you intend to make of it, in order to the solving my forefaid Difficulties: Because those Difficulties are grounded even upon the very Supposition that this Doctrine is true.

F. You will quickly perceive that Use. For this Principle, being once  
firmly

firmly established, will open us an easy Passage thro' all manner of Obstacles. Let us apply it to your first Inquiry. *What shall we say to all the ceremonial Outside of Religion?* I answer, *That it is just of so much true Value as it contributes Help to lead us in a Course of Obedience to the Will of God : And no more.* For that is the only Thing of Consequence unto us, and *nothing is to be esteemed further than as it has a Tendency thereunto.*

S. Since you keep so strictly to that Rule, I beg Leave to ask one Question, by the by, before we proceed any further. And it is this: *Whether has this ceremonial Outside any such real Influence upon that more substantial Part of Religion which you place in Practice, or no?*

F. Yes, it has. The publick assembling of People to profess their Adoration of a supreme Deity is *an Honour absolutely due unto that Deity*, and in that Respect is itself *a part of Natural Religion.* It is also a proper Means of preserving that *awful Sense of Reverence towards the Deity in the Minds of Men*, which mightily  
curbs

curbs their disorderly Inclinations, and preserves Regularity and Moderation in their very Hearts. And further, it is a great *Help to the entertaining of brotherly Love amongst Neighbours*, and thereby to the Settlement and Peace and Well-being of Societies. These are all essential Parts of our Duty. And therefore *an external Profession of Religion, having so great an Influence thereupon, ought not to be slighted*. But to prevent Mistake, I will add this Word: That, as several Circumstances, of Persons, of Time and of Place, may require different Methods of making this outward Profession; because one may be more successful in some Occasions than in others; therefore it is not to be supposed that one and the same exact Form thereof is always necessary: But that several *Alterations may be allowed in this ceremonial Part*, according to the Exigency of those Circumstances: And that *which Way soever contributes most at any Time to the main End of Religion is then to be esteemed and chosen as the most perfect*.

S. I now conceive this well enough. And therefore I intreat you to proceed to my

my second Enquiry, which is about the more *notional Part of Religion, those speculative Articles of Belief* which seem not proper to have any great Influence upon our Practice.

*F.* To that, I say, that if those Speculations have really no Influence at all upon our Practice, then are they to be looked upon as meer Trifles, of no real Value. But if they have any Influence that Way, then, as I said before, they are to be had in more or less Consideration, according as that Influence is stronger or weaker. The fundamental Point of all Points, without which the <sup>19</sup> *Apostle* has observed there can be no such Thing as Religion, is *the Belief of the Existence of a Deity, and of future Rewards and Punishments.* The Influence of this is universal, it being adapted to the natural Faculties of all Mankind; and especially to work upon those main Springs of Hope, and Fear, which are the chief Movers unto Action: And therefore it is <sup>20</sup> called *the Power of God unto Salvation:* And it is in

<sup>19</sup> Heb. xi. 6.    <sup>20</sup> Rom. i. 16.



Effect the powerfullest Engine of all others to engage Men to their Duties. There are other Points also, inferior indeed to this in Strength and general Usefulness, tho' of a more refined and nobler Nature; yet of great Efficacy also, where they are on the one Side judiciously inculcated, and on the other Side received into Minds that are fitly disposed: Such Points or Articles (I mean) of Belief, as work by *a Principle of* <sup>21</sup> *Love*, and whose particular Foundation is in *Christianity*. But I judge it not needful to branch out these general Heads into so many Subdivisions as some have done. On the contrary, I rather blame the too great Curiosity of those Spirits, who by such like *Niceties* have rendred our *plain Duty an intricate Science*; and by laying too great Stress upon Points of small Moment, have enervated the Strength of the most substantial ones. Nevertheless I condemn not the Intention of any Man, who, finding the Force of any such particular Topick upon his own Mind, makes use

<sup>21</sup> Rom. v. 8. 2 Cor. v. 14. Gal. v. 6. Eph. ii. 3, &c. Eph. v. 2, 25. 1 John iv. 9, 19.

of it to incite himself to his Duty. Let him in that freely use his own Liberty. Only *let him not offer to impose his Fancies upon other People.* For, when all is done, the true Estimate of Opinions, as well as Ceremonies, is only to be made by their Aptitude to influence our Practice. *Whatsoever may be helpful to us in the Performance of our Duty is to be pursued: Whatsoever may be a Hindrance in that Performance ought to be avoided; and whatsoever does neither help nor hinder, may be looked upon as indifferent.* But, as all Men are not equally wrought upon by the same Motives, so there may and ought to be some Latitude allowed in this Kind as well as in the other.

S. I intreat you, permit me to interpose one Word more before we quit this Subject. *The great Indifferency which you teach me to have for Doctrines that are meerly speculative, and the narrow Reduction of Things absolutely necessary to few Heads,* which you seem to aim at, are so opposite both to the common Opinion and Practice of the most part of Christians, that I would gladly learn either how  
to

to comport myself amongst them in those Respects without Offence, or, if possible, how to oppose them with yet more Strength. Wherefore if you judge any thing further may be conveniently added upon that Subject, I beseech you not to refuse me that Satisfaction.

F. Truly if you attend rightly to what I have said already, there is little Need of adding further. But however I will do it in a few Words, that may answer both those different Ends which you aim at. And, first, in Opposition to those Multipliers of speculative and abstruse Notions. Let such men consider that *the End of Religion is to help the meanest and the ignorantest of Mankind to Salvation, as well as the richest and the learnedest. Any such Notions therefore as pass the Comprehension of the meanest Capacities, are not to be reckon'd as Things whose Knowledge is of absolute and indispensable Necessity to every one.* Because those that fall short of that Comprehension would thereby be excluded from a Possibility of Salvation. And I may add, that it is to be feared  
even

even the subtlest of those *Doctors* themselves would, in some Cases, run great Hazard. If this simple Consideration will not make them more modest in their Speculations, and more reserved in broaching them, it may be justly doubted they are wedded thereunto by some other Tye than the bare Love of the Truth. But if they will hereupon complain of an imaginary Injury done to them, in confining their lofty Fancies to that low Rank of Contemplations which occupy the Vulgar, you may rectify their Mistake by looking back to what I have already declar'd unto you, *viz.* that every Man may make use of such Speculations as he finds really to have the most effectual Power upon himself to engage him to the Performance of his Duty. Let that only be their End; and in order thereunto let them freely exercise all the Faculties of their own Souls; the more the better. But I must still repeat, that in Matters of such abstracted Speculation as we now speak of, no Man ought to impose upon another. *One Man's Opinion*

*nion ought no more to be prescribed for the Entertainment of any Man's Mind, than one Man's Appetite ought to be the Rule of chusing Food for another Man's Stomach.*

Whatsoever is universally found useful by every one, either for Body or Mind, may be determined to be universally necessary; but nothing else. At least (I say at least) nothing can be determined to be universally necessary which the far greatest Part of Mankind are utterly incapable of receiving. Oh that we could at once see an expurgatory Index of School-divinity framed upon these Principles! How would the Peace of the World be restored and secured, by rooting out the very Ground of all Contention! The Work is not hard to comprehend. These Rules are easily applied to particular Cases. But I must leave these general Reflections, to return to you, and tell you that if you apply what I have said to the Desire you intimated of learning how to comport yourself amongst other Men of different Opinions, you will perceive thereby that *Things indifferent are not*



*not worth the Pains of Contention, nor can they compensate the Evils that may attend it: Wherefore a prudent compliance therein is for the most part adviseable. But at the same time, nay always, you are bound to preserve your own Thoughts inviolate in Matters essential; and neither to act nor declare any thing contrary thereunto; and also not in any wise to be an Instrument of violating that Privilege in others which you claim unto yourself. The faithful Observance of these Rules, this gentle and peaceable Disposition, will (I assure you) help much to carry you smoothly through the roughest Passages that you may happen to meet with in your Life. And this is now full enough for me to say upon that Head. The further Application thereof I refer unto your own Sagacity.*

*S. What you have said is indeed abundantly sufficient. And I will be careful to make use of it in my own Practice, with all possible Modesty and Inoffensiveness. Only one Difficulty more remains, which I have already propounded, about the Condition of the Persons who fall short*  
*of*

of that Performance which your preceding Rules seem to require. But that Difficulty, I confess, seems to me very considerable, and withal something formidable. For I am sensible of the general Defectiveness of Mankind in that Respect, and therefore dread the Consequences thereof in my own Person. If you can free me from that Anxiety, I acknowledge that my Mind will be at great Ease; and I shall then cease from importuning you any further with such manner of Questions as these have been.

F. Expect not that I should ease you by any Dispensation from the Duties which the Law of God exacts. No: *With him Obedience is better than Sacrifice.* And I have already sufficiently proved that we can have no other certain Mark, but our Obedience, of our having any Interest in the Sacrifice even of Christ himself. That therefore is the Thing that lies upon us to look after; to assure our Interest in him that Way; and then we need not doubt of our participating of

<sup>1</sup> 1 Sam. xv. 22. Ps. li. 16, 17.

those

those Benefits which he came to procure unto Mankind. I say then, That *our Obligation to actual Obedience is indispensable.* But nevertheless I would not have you look upon it with so uncomfortable a Prospect as you seem to do. For tho' I will acknowledge it to be *hard*, yet I must assert that it is *not impossible* to be performed. And that being so, the Encouragements propounded are abundantly sufficient to ingage any reasonable Man in the Attempt. This Argument is copious. But I will endeavour, as I have done hitherto, to bring all to the shortest and directest Issue that I can. Remember, then, that in your natural Researches you have established one of the most essential Properties of the Supreme Diety to be *Goodness.* Now observe how inconsistent it is with that Idea, to suppose him to require more from us than he has capacited us to perform. 'Tis the unjust Charge of *the slothful* <sup>2</sup> *Servant, that his Lord expected to reap where he had not sown;* than which nothing can be more injurious to the di-

<sup>2</sup> Mat xxv. 24, &c.

vine Perfections. The Obedience therefore that he requires must be such as is suitable to the Capacity of Human Nature, accompanied with those Assistances which he affords it. He expects not from us the *Perfection* <sup>3</sup> *of pure intellectual Spirits*, but such Things as Men cloathed with Flesh may attain unto. And from every Man in particular he expects Performances proportionable to the particular Circumstances of his Condition. This is perfectly reasonable in itself, and it is no less perfectly established in Scripture. Our Saviour declares in many Places <sup>4</sup> *that the Measure of Mens Transgressions should not so much be taken by the Acts themselves, as by the Measure of Light and Conviction against which they were committed.* And in one Place <sup>5</sup> he does it in these express Words, *That the Servant who knew his Lord's Will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his Will, should be beaten with many Stripes; but that he who knew it not, and did commit Things worthy*

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. xiii. 9, &c. <sup>4</sup> Matt. xi. 20, &c. Luke. x. 12, &c. Joh. xv. 22, 24. <sup>5</sup> Luke xii. 47, 48.

*of Stripes, should be beaten but with few. For* (he adds) *unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be requir'd.* Thus therefore it is evident that *the Duties requir'd from us bear a* <sup>6</sup> *Proportion to the Knowledge, and Strength, and Opportunity, or (in a Word) to the Capacity given us.* So that they are not absolute Impossibilities, and therefore neither ought we to be dejected with Despair of their Atchievement.

S. I cannot well answer either your Argument or your Proof. But nevertheless I find in Effect, by Experience, that *all Mankind fall much short of Perfection.* And therefore this seeming Appearance of it in Theory does not yet free me from those Anxieties which arise from its manifest and real Defect.

F. Have Patience a little. We shall quickly come to a better Understanding of the Thing. You allow my Proof to be good, that the Perfection requir'd from us is attainable; but yet you affirm, that in effect it is never attained. These Things

<sup>6</sup> Rom. xii. 3, &c. Eph. iv. 7, &c.



are inconsistent one with another. Let us inquire therefore whether there be not some *Mistake in your Notion of Perfection*. For probably it is in this as in other Debates, that the Knot lies only in the right Explication of some Term. Our Wranglings are ordinarily more about Words than Things, and *most Men would be of the very same Mind, if they did but once rightly understand one another*. This Mistake of yours (for such I presume it to be) I had design'd to obviate, by telling you already that the Obedience required from us is such as is suitable to the Capacity of human Nature. Now I desire you to observe, that if you look for such a Degree of Perfection in that Obedience as is absolutely above that Capacity, you are in a manifest Error; for that cannot be the Degree that is required from us. Let us see then what it is. The Expressions truly are very comprehensive and strong, *viz. That we must be holy, pure and perfect, as our Father, who is in Heaven, is perfect*. Well, What can this signify? The absolute

Perfection of God is certainly not attainable by such Creatures as we are. Wherefore the Sense of that, and all such like Commands, must needs be, that as the Nature and Essence of God is placed in the highest Degree of all Perfection, so we should tend to the highest Degree of that Perfection which our Natures are capable of; and that we should faithfully improve the Talents that are put into our Hands, the Opportunities and Advantages that are offered us, to that Purpose. *This, I say, is positively required of us, and less than this will not serve the Turn.*

S. I beg your Excuse that I cannot yet yield a full Assent to what you drive at, until you please to explain more particularly to me *what is that very Degree of Perfection which you say our Natures are capable of*, that so I may examine whether in Effect it be ever attained or no.

F. You do well; and I will endeavour to satisfy you. Remember then that it is *not the Perfection of God, nor of Angels, but of Men; and that neither is it the same Degree*

*Degree of Perfection in each individual Man, but different according to Mens different Capacities. In a Word, it is not <sup>7</sup> Impeccability, but <sup>8</sup> Sincerity. And now I will further shew you what this Sincerity means; and that it is the very Thing required of us; as also that it is attainable; and that it has been attained. After which I advise you to dispute no longer about it, but to apply yourself to Practice, and let the Effects thereof shine forth in your Life. Sincerity is nothing else but an honest, upright, hearty, and constant Application of Mind, accompanied with the same faithful Exertion of all possible Endeavours, to do the Thing required. 'Tis the doing of all that possibly can be done, and not more. That this is required appears from God's demanding the whole <sup>9</sup> Heart, and declaring the <sup>10</sup> Inconsistency of his Service with that of the World: I say this shews that he requires the utmost Exercise of all our Powers in the obeying of his*

<sup>7</sup> 1 King. viii. 46. Eccl. vii. 20. 1 John i. 8, 10. Jam. iii. 2. <sup>8</sup> 1 Cor. v. 8. Tit. ii. 7. <sup>9</sup> Deut. x. 12. Matt. xxii. 37. <sup>10</sup> Matt. vi. 24. Luke xvi. 13.

Commandments. And where the Heart is thus sincere and upright, the Intention honest, and the Mind willing, I do not say the Will is taken for the Deed, but I affirm that the Deed is accepted according to the Measure of the Capacity, <sup>11</sup> *according to that a Man hath, and not according to that he hath not.* And hence it is that in Scripture *a willing* <sup>12</sup> *Heart is frequently stiled a perfect Heart.* And the Apostle Paul <sup>13</sup> in the same Place, where he acknowledges that *he had not really attained to Perfection, but was only pressing forwards towards it, nevertheless accounts himself amongst the number of those that are perfect*: Undoubtedly, because his Endeavours were sincere and constant. Now that this Sort of Perfection is attainable is evident in itself, beyond any Proof that can be made of it. For *it is nothing else but doing all that ever a Man can do.* And surely no Man is so *absurd as to deny the Possibility of his doing what he can do.* But here it will be good to subjoin,

<sup>11</sup> 2 Cor. viii. 12.<sup>12</sup> 1 Chron. xxix. 9.<sup>13</sup> Phil. iii. 12, 15.

that

that this Notion of doing all a Man can do is not a Palliation for gross and frequent Miscarriages. On the contrary, it is an absolute Obligation to overcome them. For there is no Man but by a constant Watchfulness may be so far Master of his own Actions as not to fall frequently into the same known Fault. Let us consider it in a familiar Example. What so common as *swearing*? Now can it be doubted but any habitual Swearer may, with a strong Resolution and diligent Care, retain himself one Quarter of an Hour from that Sin? Surely it cannot. But if a Quarter of an Hour, why not then Half an Hour, why not an Hour, a Day, a Week, a Month, a Year? The same Care will still produce the same Effect. And not only so, but the Work will be more easy in the End than in the Beginning. For the Strength of the Habit, which in the Beginning swayed powerfully towards Vice, and made the first Resistance difficult, will in the End help as effectually towards the Work of Reformation, and make the Conquest



easy. Then will be experienc'd the Truth of those Sayings, *That the Commandments of Christ are not* <sup>14</sup> *grievous, but that his* <sup>15</sup> *Yoke is easy and his Burden light.* And what I say on this particular Instance of swearing will hold in all other known Transgressions. *Resolution and Watchfulness will overcome them.* He that makes it as much his Business to reform his Life as another does to learn some Trade, or Art, will succeed as effectually in that Design as the other in this. The one may fail now and then: But in the main he practises his Art exactly, and is therefore reputed a perfect Master. And so the other, tho' he be not exempt from all Possibility of Miscarriage, yet he cannot chuse but attain to *such a Conquest over Sin, as that it shall have no longer* <sup>16</sup> *any Rule over him,* and to such a general and habitual Practice of Virtue as may truly denominate him a righteous Person. And doing so, that Man may have Comfort; for the Scripture is most evidently clear,

<sup>14</sup> 1 John v. 3.  
vi. 12.

<sup>15</sup> Matt. xi. 30.

<sup>16</sup> Rom.

that

that his <sup>17</sup> former Transgressions shall be no longer imputed to him, but that by Perseverance in an habitual Course of well-doing he shall save his Soul. Thus then, I say, this Perfection is, attainable; and with it, Happiness. The Importance is, that we apply ourselves heartily to the Work: For where such Application is real, it fails not to be effectual. In the last Place, I have promised to shew you that this Sort of Perfection, I say, perfect Sincerity, has in Effect been attained: And for that I here give you a List <sup>18</sup> of divers Persons who are recorded to have thereby experienced both Comfort and Assurance in their Condition. I will add no more. But to conclude, because of the Importance of the Matter, I refer you, for the Removal of all other Doubts upon it, unto that honest and plain, yet excellent, Discourse of the Reverend Dr. Tillotson's upon 1 John iii. 10. (*In this the Children of God are*

<sup>17</sup> Prov. xxviii. 13. Is. i. 16, &c. Is. lv. 7. Ez. iii. 18, &c. Ez. 18. Ez. xxxiii. Rom. ii. 7.

<sup>18</sup> 2 Kings xx. 3. Neh. xiii. xiv. xxii. Job. xxvii. 5, 6. Job. xxxi. 6. Psal. vii. viii. xxvi. Is. xxxviii. 3. 2 Cor. i. 12. Luke i. 6.

*manifest, and the Children of the Devil; whosoever doth not Righteousness is not of God,)* which single Sermon of his will teach you more solid and useful Religion than many Volumes of notional and disputative Authors.

S. I cannot but now acknowledge that this *Scheme* you have given me of *Christian Religion* is so plain and intelligible in all its Parts, so suited to the Faculties of Human Nature, and so agreeable to the revealed Will of God in Scripture, that I am constrained to acquiesce in every thing you have said. And the great Clearness that I now perceive therein makes me astonished at the Perverseness of those Men, who, rather than follow the Guidance of this Light, and walk in that *even Path* which it discovers unto them, chuse to throw themselves into intricate and obscure Labyrinths, where they have no Assistance in their Conduct but from the faint and uncertain Glances of dark or dazzling Mysteries; or, to use a Scripture Metaphor, *who* <sup>19</sup> *forsake the Fountain*

<sup>19</sup> Jerem. ii. 13.

*of Living Waters, and hew out unto themselves Cisterns, broken Cisterns, that can hold no Water.*

F. Your Astonishment is not without Cause. Yet the Reason of this Miscarriage may be easily perceived. *Interest in the Guides or Governors, and Ignorance in the general Herd of Men,* contribute much unto it. But our *Saviour* himself has shewn us the great Reason thereof, in telling us that <sup>20</sup> *Men love Darknes rather than Light, because their Deeds are evil.* They are conscious to themselves of the Evil of their Doings, and are loath to be at the Pains of reforming: And therefore they endeavour to frame unto themselves such a System of Religion as they fancy may save them in their Sins, rather than from their Sins. *This is the great Obstacle to the Advancement of Truth, that they* <sup>21</sup> *receive not the Love of it, but have Pleasure in Unrighteousness.* But without troubling ourselves further in searching out the Occasion of these Mens

<sup>20</sup> John iii. 19.

<sup>21</sup> 2 Thes. ii. 20. &c.

Miscarriage, I again exhort you, unto whom this true Light now shineth, that you make it your special Care to <sup>22</sup> *cast off the unfruitful Works of Darknefs, and to let* <sup>23</sup> *your Light so shine before Men that they may see your good Works, and glorify the Father who is in Heaven.* That will be a far more effectual Way of convincing them, than all that I have said has been to convince you.

S. I thankfully receive your admonition, and resolve now to cease all useless Inquisitiveness, and, by the Grace of God, to apply myself so diligently to the Regulation of my Life by these Rules, that I may in the End be made Partaker of that Happiness which attends the Observance of them; and that you may, in the mean Time, receive the Comfort to see that your Labour has not been bestowed upon me in vain.

F. The good God, I beseech him, strengthen your honest Resolutions, and

<sup>22</sup> Rom. xiii. 12. Eph. v. 11.

<sup>23</sup> Mat. v. 16.



crown them with a fuitable Success. To facilitate your Work, I will sum up all in a few Words, and then leave you to his Blessing. You have learnt that *the Substance of true Religion consists neither in Ceremonies nor Notions, but in Sincerity and Practice. It lies not in outward* <sup>24</sup> *Profession and Shew; not in* <sup>1</sup> *Meats and Drinks, and other carnal Ordinances; not in* <sup>2</sup> *Sacrifices, though even of God's own Appointment; not in* <sup>3</sup> *Faith; nay, not in* <sup>4</sup> *Gifts, how excellent soever; nor even in the Knowledge of deepest Mysteries. These Things indeed are Means and Instruments. But the End of all is* <sup>5</sup> *Righteousness, and the Effect thereof is Peace and Joy in the Holy Ghost. What God requires at our Hands, towards himself, is That we adore him in* <sup>6</sup> *Spirit and in Truth. What he requires of us towards our Neighbours, is* <sup>7</sup> *Brotherly Kindness and Charity. St. James explains this last Branch, in telling us, that* <sup>8</sup> *pure Reli-*

<sup>24</sup> Rom. xxviii. 29. Gal. vi. 25. <sup>1</sup> Heb. ix. 20.  
<sup>2</sup> Is. i. 11. &c. <sup>3</sup> Jam ii. 14. <sup>4</sup> 1 Cor. xiii. 2. &c.  
<sup>5</sup> Rom. xiv. 17. <sup>6</sup> John iv. 23, 24. <sup>7</sup> 1 Cor. xiii.  
<sup>1</sup>, &c. 2 Pet. i. 7. <sup>8</sup> Jam. i. 27.

*gion and undefiled before God the Father, consists in visiting the Fatherless and Widows in their Affliction, and in keeping ourselves unspotted from the World. And the Prophet Micah comprehends both Branches, in requiring us, To do <sup>9</sup> justly, to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with our God. These then are the eternal and indispensable Laws of God to Mankind. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is so far from dispensing therewithal, that its great Design is to inforce them more strongly, and to bind us thereunto more firmly than either the Law of Nature or the Law of Moses had done before. It teaches us that to fear <sup>10</sup> God, and to work Righteousness, are the Means to procure Acceptance with him, and to secure our <sup>11</sup> Happiness both here and hereafter. Wherefore amuse not yourself about useless <sup>12</sup> Questions, and verbal Controversies, avoid <sup>13</sup> profane and vain Babblings, and Opposition of Science,*

<sup>9</sup> Mic. vi. 8.    <sup>10</sup> Acts x. 35.    Rom. xiv. 18.

<sup>11</sup> 1 Pet. iii. 11, &c. Mat. x. 2.    2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.

<sup>12</sup> 1 Tim. vi. 4, 5.    <sup>13</sup> 1 Tim. vi. 20.

*falsly*

*falsely so called: For thereof come* <sup>14</sup> *Envy, Strife, Railings, evil Surmisings, perverse Disputations, Uncharitableness, and all manner of Evil. But study thou* <sup>15</sup> *the Things which become sound Doctrine, to know your Duty on all Occasions, and to do it. Be careful to* <sup>16</sup> *maintain good Works: Be* <sup>17</sup> *rich therein: Make yourself a* <sup>18</sup> *Store thereof against the Time to come, for they will enable you to lay hold on eternal Life: Exercise* <sup>19</sup> *thyself continually unto Godliness, for that hath the Promise both of the Life that now is, and of that which is to come. Now, that you may always remember these Instructions, that they may not* <sup>20</sup> *depart from thine Eyes, but be deeply engraven even* <sup>21</sup> *upon the Table of thy Heart (because indeed they will be* <sup>22</sup> *Health to thy Navel, and Marrow to thy bones) I will seal them up with the Words of aged David; and as he to his Son Solomon, so I advise you, my Son,* <sup>23</sup> *Know thou the*

<sup>14</sup> 1 Tim. vi. 4, 5.    <sup>15</sup> Tit. ii. 1, &c.    <sup>16</sup> Tit. iii. 8.    <sup>17</sup> 1 Tim. vi. 18.    <sup>18</sup> 1 Tim. vi. 19.    <sup>19</sup> 1 Tim. iv. 7, 8.    <sup>20</sup> Prov. iv. 21.    <sup>21</sup> Prov. iii. 3.    <sup>22</sup> Prov. iii. 8.    <sup>23</sup> 1 Chron. xxviii. 9.

110 The RELIGION

*God of thy Father, and serve him with a perfect Heart, and willing Mind: For the Lord searches all Hearts, and understandeth all the Imaginations of the Thoughts: If thou seek him he will be found of thee, but if thou forsake him he will cast thee off for ever.*



5 MA 56

ADVICE



A D V I C E

T O A

S O N.

**M**<sup>Y</sup> dear and only *Son*,  
Now that thy infant Years are  
done,

All childish Toys at once give o'er ;  
To Manly Thoughts thy Mind  
prepare,

Receive these Marks of my paternal  
Care ;

And



112    *A D V I C E   t o   a   S O N.*

And lend both *Ear* and *Heart* unto my  
*Lore,*

*A father's Lore* no less requires.

'Tis *Love*, pure *Love*, that it inspires,  
*Love* without Mixture of base Ends,  
*Love* that from *Heav'n* proceeds, and  
thither tends.

*Be wise.*

All that ever Mortals prize ;  
Honour, Pleasure,  
Power, Treasure,  
Are oft obtain'd,  
Oftner disdain'd ;

But still, with or without them, *Happi-  
ness* is gain'd

By what that Syllable implies,  
*Wisdom* ! O comprehensive Theme !  
Who can fathom, who can teach,  
How far *Wisdom's* Power doth  
reach ?

He that attempts to draw that  
Scheme

Must soar full high, full deep must  
pierce,

Must lustrate all the Universe.

*Wisdom*

ADVICE to a SON. 113

*Wisdom* through each Part does  
dispense

A constant vig'rous Influence.

To meanest Works she gently bends,

To highest nobly she ascends,

And unto all herself extends.

Her Voice divine, of Laws the  
best,

Secretly penetrates each Breast;

Is felt more eas'ly than exprest;

And known to him that silently attends.

Hail glorious Fountain of eternal Light!

Thy great Idea grows too bright.

Either increase and strengthen my weak  
Sight,

Or check my too advent'rous Flight.

Teach me, that I may teach thy Ways,

In humble modest Lays,

Conceiv'd with ease, and eas'ly un-  
derstood;

Do thou reduce

My wandering thoughts to Use;

And teach that to be *wise* is to be  
*good*.

Blest

114 A D V I C E to a S O N.

Blest Conjunction, happy band,  
*Wisdom* and *Virtue* Hand in Hand!  
Blest Soul that yields to their supreme  
Command!

By mutual Helps they guide us as  
we go:

The first Step is *to know*, the next *to do*,  
And the Search of *Knowledge* too,  
from thence

We learn this useful Inference ;  
That tho' the various Objects may pre-  
sent,

Some for Delight, and some for Or-  
nament ;

To each of which our studious Minds  
to cheer,

Some Moments may be fitly giv'n ;  
Yet none deserves our Soul's main Bent,  
Nor wholly clears from Guilt of Time  
mispent,

But what directs our *Practice* here,  
And leads to *Heav'n*.

'Tis in *Religion's School* we learn that Skill:  
Not human Schools, which all with  
Noise do fill.

Deep

ADVICE to a SON. 115

Deep Truth, like Rivers deep, runs  
smooth and still.

*Religion*, sov'rain Mistress of Man's  
Life,

Is in those Schools so rudely tost,

The *Bond of Peace* becomes the *Ball*  
of *Strife*,

And oft is in the Hurry lost.

The *Learn'd*, forsooth, in *Notions* so  
delight,

That for meer *Notions* they contend  
and Fight ;

*Notions* confest so high that they escape  
our Sight.

Whilst vulgar Souls, alas, to Earth  
deprest,

In *shews of Pageantry* take up their  
Rest,

And only for *corporeal Rites* contest.

Thus most pursue an empty Name,

A Fantom which themselves do frame ;

(*Solid Religion* few discover :)

And therefore erring in their Aim,

Must needs shoot short or over.

*Religion*

*Religion* ne'ertheless subsists.

Nay she in *obvious Truth* consists.

'Tis we that her involve, then seek,  
in Mists.

Hence all *Chimeras* vain,

The vap'rous Products of a heated  
Brain.

Her seat is in the *Heart*.

Hence all adult'rate Dress of Art.

Her native Beauty shines thro' ev'ry  
Part;

And all her Paths are streight; her  
Precepts plain.

*Her School stands open.* Hark ! She bids  
us look.

Whilst she unfolds her *double Book*.

*God's Word*, and *Nature's Law*.

“ These two (says she) all Truth  
“ contain,

“ And each the other best explain.

“ Who reads but one may false Con-  
“ clusions draw,

“ But who compares them both

“ ne'er misses in the main.

“ You



“ You that will learn (again she cries)  
“ Reflect on your short Possibilities;  
“ And frame not Projects vain above  
“ the Skys.

“ Your several Relations view;  
“ And render, as you can, to each  
“ its due.

“ Do not so much aspire

“ At Speculations high'r,

“ As unto what you know still to be  
“ true.

“ For I no Task above your Force  
“ require;

“ And *Knowledge* best by *Practice* will  
“ accrue.

“ *To God pay pure and humble Adora-*  
“ *tion.*

“ *To Man bear universal Love.*

“ *Let Reason in each Breast rule ev'ry*  
“ *Passion.*

“ All Duties on these Hinges move.

“ Meditate on their Use, and it im-  
“ prove.

“ The

118 A D V I C E to a S O N.

“ The opposite to these is *Sin* ;  
“ O’er which a *Vict’ry* sure to win,  
“ Consult, believe, obey your God  
“ *within*.

She said. And I, *my Son*, will add no more.

These Truths are pregnant. Fill thy Store.  
Then till, then sow thy Ground. Blow  
thine own Spark ;

And sit not sleeping in the Dark.

Be bold ; but cautious. On, with docile  
Mind,

And with Integrity of Breast.

In following her Instructions thou shalt  
find,

Or safely mayst ignore the rest.

5 MA 56

F I N I S.

